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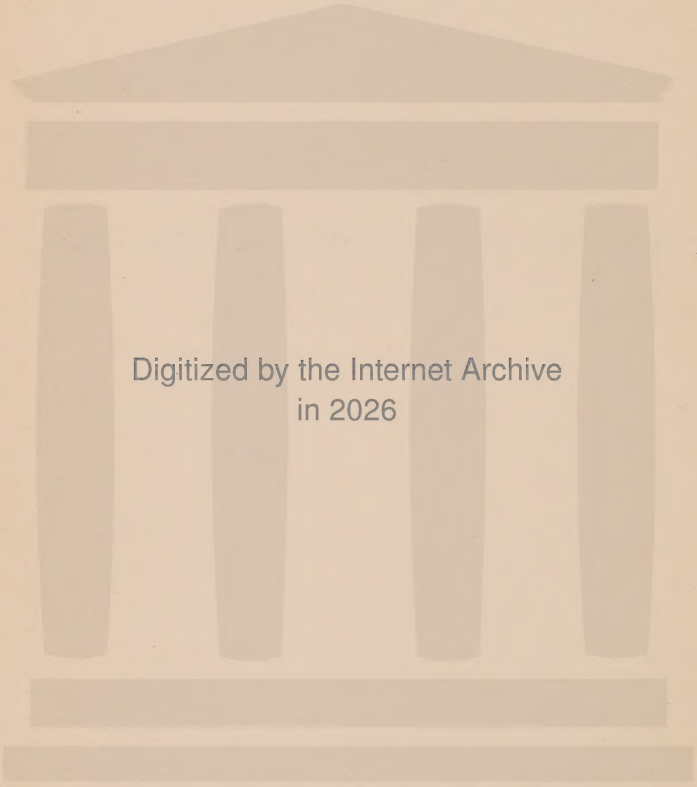
LEADERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION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SIEYÈS

as a Member of the Directory

from a coloured engraving in the Hennin Collection

LEADERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN, in 1895–9, in the course of his Lectures on the French Revolution, Lord Acton spoke of the mass of new material which had been published during the last thirty years, he went on to say, 'In a few years all these publications will be completed, and all will be known that ever can be known.' Thirty more years have passed, and the end seems to be as far off as ever. New material is still being published, and imperfect judgements are still being expressed. There are few signs yet of 'that golden age' in which 'our historians will be sincere, and our history certain.'

Probably the historian will never know enough to make his history certain. His business is to reconstruct past facts as accurately as he can by selecting and arranging the most important pieces of evidence from the tangle of information put before him. For this he needs experience, judgement, and imagination: the disciplined imagination of the detective, not the freely creative imagination of the poet or artist. He will consider which accounts of an event depend upon eye-witness, and which upon hearsay; which were written down at the time, and which long afterwards. He will balance private letters against public speeches as evidence of a man's real opinions. He will learn how far to discount polemical or propagandist pamphlets, and when to suspect memoir-writers of malice or special pleading. He will remember how few public men, in the revolutionary and Napoleonic era, failed to find a place in Eymery's *Dictionnaire des Girouettes*, or gallery of political weathercocks. In all these things the French Revolution, by the very richness of its materials, is a fascinating field for historical study.

History cannot be certain: but the historian can be sincere. He may not discover truth, but he must always be

a truth-seeker. Here the French Revolution is a warning, as well as an opportunity. For it is notorious that, from Lescène des Maison's *Histoire de la Révolution en France*, published (in April, 1789) a month before the Revolution began, to the latest controversies of Mathiez and Lenôtre, the study of the French Revolution has been perverted by the spirit of political partisanship. To the group of historians who came under the influence of 1830 and 1848 the republicanism of 1791–4 seemed almost divine: but they could not agree as to its Messiah: Lamartine chose Vergniaud; Louis Blanc, Robespierre; Michelet, Danton; and Villiaumé, Jean Paul Marat. To Lamartine all that was good in those years perished with the Girondins: to Louis Blanc regeneration began with their fall: to Michelet the whole Revolution was an inspired mass-movement, which it was blasphemous as well as unpatriotic to criticize. The scientific study of the evidence, which Carlyle might have undertaken, if he had not been 'scared from the British Museum by an offender who sneezed in the Reading Room,' was begun by Tocqueville in France, and Sybel in Germany. It has been taken up again during the last thirty years by Sorel, Aulard, Mathiez, and many more. But the subject has still too many bearings on modern French history to be treated in a quite impartial spirit. Bougeart was imprisoned for four months, and his book *Marat* confiscated by the police in 1860. Vermorel's Introduction to his edition of Marat's works (1869) was a violent political attack on Gambetta, who had coupled his hero (one might have thought it a compliment) with Cæsar, as a demagogue and an anti-democrat. Forty years ago Aulard was shot at, after a professorial lecture, by a member of the audience who disagreed with his conclusions. To-day he is decried as a 'Dantonist' by a new school of avowed 'Robespierrists,' whose spokesman is Mathiez; whilst both denounce the Royalist apologies of Bainville, and the *œuvres de vulgarisation* of Lenôtre.

INTRODUCTION

An English writer on the Revolution is in no danger of assassination. But he may well be troubled by the difficulty of treating a subject that rouses such passions impartially, and of finding an Ariadne's thread to guide him out of the labyrinth. The plan adopted in the chapters which follow is to study the Revolution through a series of representative Revolutionists ; to describe their part in it, and to interpret it through their experience. If there is some risk of repetition in this method, there is less danger of looking at the many-sided structure of the Revolution from only one or two angles. We soon find how different were the antecedents and the capacities of the men whom the Revolution attracted and used; how many currents of thought flowed into its flood; and how impossible it is to include all its aspects or ideas within the scope of an epigram, or the terms of a definition. 'Leaders,' we call them; but indeed they were led—or rather, swept off their feet, and carried along by a movement which they were powerless to control.

It will perhaps help towards a consecutive view of the Revolution if we preface the separate studies which follow with a short sketch of the background common to them all. Let us imagine the Revolution as a great drama in five acts. Here is the plot.

The Prologue is placed in the first fifteen years of the reign of Louis XVI, from 1774 to 1789, when every attempt to avert the results of a century's misrule, bankruptcy, and class war, is blocked by class privilege, vested interests, and a king who has no mind or will of his own.

The first Act opens with the summoning of the States-General in May, 1789. The Commons, who represent the mass of the nation, together with a part of Convocation (the clergy) and of the House of Lords (the Bishops and Peers), form themselves into a National or Constituent Assembly, and refuse to be dissolved until they have con-

trol of taxation, and a Constitution under which the King is the legal Executive, and not the arbitrary ruler, of the Sovereign People. This first Act ends with the fall of the Bastille in July, and the transference of the King from Versailles to Paris in October, 1789.

The second Act covers the main legislative work of the Revolution—the reconstruction of France, of its crown, Church, parliament, and administration—which was carried through by the Constituent Assembly between October, 1789, and June, 1791. Throughout this period the character of the Revolution was changing: national enthusiasm was giving place to parliamentary compromise and party intrigue; patriots were becoming politicians, quarrelling about policies, and competing for power; the interests of Paris began to dominate the Assembly, at the expense of those of the provinces; the discussion of Church affairs added fresh bitterness to political issues; and it grew increasingly apparent that the King was both unwilling and incompetent to play his part as a constitutional monarch. This second Act ends with the King's ill-advised and disastrous flight to Varennes, on June 21, 1791, which gave a new trend to the whole Revolution.

The third Act, which runs from June 21, 1791, to August 10, 1792, sees the working out of these new influences—republicanism, springing from Varennes; democracy, the protest of the working classes against their disfranchisement by the bourgeois Assembly; war-fever, stimulated by the disloyalty of the emigrants; the struggle between conservatives and radicals (Feuillants and Brissotins) for control of the Government; and growing exasperation at the certain obstruction and suspected treachery of the Court. At last all these combustibles explode in the ' Second Revolution ' of August 10, 1792, the sack of the Tuileries, and the suspension of the King.,

Act IV is the struggle between the Girondin party, which dominates the Convention of September, 1792, and

the growing forces outside Parliament—the Commune of of Paris and the Jacobin Club. The main issues are the conduct of the war, the fate of the King, the treatment of the clergy, and the regulation of food and wages. The Girondin leaders gradually show their inability to rule, and lose the confidence of the country. They are overthrown by the *coup d'état*, or 'third revolution,' of May 31 to June 2, 1793.

The fifth and last Act of the Revolution runs from June 1793, to July, 1794, and is the story of the rise and fall of the Jacobin Committee Government—the *régime* of the Terror. It is cut in two by the fall of Danton in April, 1794, and ends with the fall of Robespierre on July 82, the same year.

There remains an Epilogue to the drama—the anti-Jacobin reaction of Thermidor, and the last days of the Convention, 1794, down to its final dissolution in October, 1795.

During the six years of this revolutionary drama there must have been at least a hundred men who played large enough parts, and left a clear enough impression on the records of the time, to repay historical study—over fifty, for instance, figure as speakers alone in Aulard's volumes on the Orators of the three Assemblies. Few of them were great men, but they lived under the microscope of great times, which gave to their most insignificant qualities portentous proportions. Perhaps, too, their age and country, which subjected them to no standardized education, or compulsory service, or industrial discipline, perhaps the general disuse of law and order to which the generation before the Revolution had grown accustomed, perhaps the cult of Rousseau's natural man, encouraged a peculiar variety and extravagance of character. Whatever the cause, there are few periods in history so rich in personalities as the years 1789–95.

Of the eleven men chosen for study, one (Mirabeau)

died in the middle of the second act of the drama, and one (Louvet) during the epilogue; one (Brissot) was executed, and another (Marat) was murdered, at the end of the fourth act; two (Danton and Fabre) were put to death in the middle, and two more (Robespierre and St. Just) at the end of the fifth. Three only (Sieyès, Lafayette, and Dumouriez) survived the Revolution, and lived to see its cynical apotheosis in the Napoleonic Empire. But to all of them the Revolution was an overwhelming experience. What did they do in it? What did they think of it? Let us see.

SIEYES

EMMANUEL JOSEPH SIEYES

1748 May 3, born at Fréjus.

1773 Ordained priest.

1775 Secretary to Lubersac, Bishop of Tréguier.

1787 Member of Provincial Assembly of Orléans.

1788 *Vues sur les moyens d'exécution dont les représentans de la France pourront disposer en* 1789.
Essai sur les privilèges.

1789 *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?*
Délibérations à prendre dans les Assemblées.
Elected deputy to States-General by Tiers-État of Paris.
Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée des droits de l'homme et du citoyen.
Quelques idées de constitution applicables à la ville de Paris.

1790 *Projet de loi contre les délits, etc.*
Projet d'un décret provisoire sur le clergé.
Aperçu d'une nouvelle organisation de la justice, etc.

1791 *Déclaration volontaire aux patriotes, etc.*

1792 Elected deputy to the Convention for *Département* of Sarthe.

1793 *Journal d'instruction sociale.*

1795 *Notice sur la vie de Sieyès.*

1799 Director, then Consul.

1836 Died at Paris, æt. 88.

AUTHORITIES:

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Clapham. *The Abbé Sieyès* (London, 1908).

SIEYES

I

VISITORS to Paris between 1830 and 1836 were able to see many material relics of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic *régime*, which have since been swept away in the attempt to make the city safe for bureaucracy, by depriving the mob of sites for barricades. Even more interesting than the streets and buildings of Old Paris were the figures of the few men who, having played a leading part in the great and dangerous days of 1789–95, were still living on under the dull, safe rule of that repentant Jacobin, Louis Philippe. One of these survivors might occasionally be seen driving out in his carriage, or walking stiffly along from his house in the Faubourg St. Honoré—'a small, thin, thoughtful man, with grey hair, a grave smile, and a courteous manner,' carrying his stick 'held out from both his hands crossed behind his back.' His sharp, clever features reminded scholars of the portraits of Erasmus. If he spoke, his voice was still musical, rather weak and indistinct, but charming. But he did not speak often, or easily. It was known that he had refused to write his memoirs, and was unwilling to talk of what he remembered. Had he not always been reputed a philosopher—oracular, austere, and a little cynical? Besides, people remembered what he had been through. They thought him another Daniel delivered from the burning fiery furnace; the hair of his head had been singed, the smell of fire had passed upon him; and they drew back a little from his touch. They were proud, but rather afraid, of Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès.

He had been born as long ago—and how much longer it must have seemed to them—as 1748, when Louis XV

was still *bien aimé*, but when the disastrous peace of Aix-la-Chapelle first brought home to popular opinion the incompetence of his government, and the failure of his arms; and when the early publications of the Rationalist school were sowing those dragons' teeth which had since produced so unexpected a harvest.

Young Sieyès was a victim of piety and middle-class parents. He wanted to go into the artillery, or the mining engineers, but was forced into the Church. 'Behold him thus' at the age of fourteen 'decidedly sequestered from all reasonable human society' (the account is his own, but the language is that of his eighteenth-century translator); 'ignorant, like every scholar of his age, having neither seen, heard, nor understood anything, and chained to the centre of a sphere which was to be instead of the universe to him. . . . In a situation so contrary to his natural disposition it is not extraordinary that he should have contracted a sort of savage melancholy, accompanied with the most Stoic indifference as to his person and his future situation. He was destined to bid farewell to happiness; he was out of nature; the love of study only could claim him.'

No one can pass through ten years of seminary life without acquiring, however unwillingly, a clerical stamp. The regular, irresponsible life, the hours of silence for study or prayer, the habit of reciting Offices, and the obligation to self-examination and confession, turn the mind inwards, and give the character a meditative tone, which may, indeed, fit a man for great ends, but will indispose him to pursue them by ordinary means. Sieyès 'probably may, in his solitude, have formed his mind to the love of truth and justice, and even to the knowledge of man, which is often confounded with the knowledge of men.' 'The leading passion in his mind' (so he describes himself in middle life) 'is the love of truth. . . . He is not content when he enters into a subject, until he has examined it to the bottom, and analysed all its parts, and afterwards put it together.' This scientific thoroughness, this philosophical

search for unity, he carried, not (as his teachers intended) into theology, but into the study of Locke, the anatomist of the mind; of Condillac, who thought that experience contained nothing but what it received from outside; and of Bonnet, 'the first careful student of the psychology of the severed worm.' As a result he remained all his life a political vivisectionist. Every book that he read, and every experiment that he made, confirmed his belief in reason, progress, paternal government, and the rule of law. Every influence strengthened his dislike for the Church, the *Parlements* and all other privileged and obstructive bodies. By the time that he became a priest he had (as he claims) 'succeeded in dismissing from his mind every notion or sentiment of a superstitious nature'; and his tutors reported to his bishop that, 'though he might turn him into a gentlemanlike cultured canon, yet he was by no means fitted for the Ministry of the Church.'

These ten years of theological training were followed by ten years more of ecclesiastical business. Under the patronage of Lubersac, bishop first of Tréguier, and then of Chartres, Sieyès saw clerical and aristocratic society from inside, and got first-hand knowledge of administration. He carried his scientific habits into his new life. 'I thought myself,' he says, 'a traveller amongst an unknown people, whose manners required to be studied.' A confirmed student, he distrusted instinct all his life as a guide to truth, and was in danger of missing surface facts (which often contained the clue to what he wanted) in the search for underlying principles. 'What a pity,' said a lady of him, 'that that so amiable a man should have wanted to be so profound!' He also lacked, for he deliberately put it aside, the historical point of view. Politics he regarded as the science 'not of what is, but of what ought to be.' 'To judge the present by the past,' he said, 'is to judge the known by the unknown.' But can anyone know the present? Is it not the peculiar advantage of history that we can isolate and study a piece of the past, hopeful of arriving at the truth

about it, and confident that it will turn out to be extraordinarily like some piece of the present which we cannot study because we cannot detach it from its surroundings?

Sieyès was saved from some of the results of this mistake by the clearness with which he saw the relationship between philosophy and statesmanship. 'So long as the philosopher does not go outside the bounds of truth, he must never be accused of going too far. His function is to fix the political end, and he cannot do that until he has arrived there. If he were to stop halfway, and raise his standard there, he might merely mislead. On the other hand, the duty of the administrator is to adapt his advance to the nature of the ground. The philosopher does not know where he is, unless he has reached his goal; the administrator, unless he sees where the goal is, does not know where he is going.' Sieyès put these words at the head of his most famous pamphlet, and made them the guide of his career. He was that unusual person, the philosopher who is not afraid of going too far.

His seminary mind was further corrected by his seminary character. Trained to look for absolute worth, and finding more beauty in music than in a woman's eyes (it is said he never noticed their colour), he formed few friendships, disliked most of the men with whom he worked during the Revolution, and had no affection for the crowd—though there is no need to believe Napoleon's story of his refusing to say Mass for the *canaille*. On the other hand, when he went as his bishop's representative to the Estates of Brittany, 'nothing could exceed the indignation he brought from this assembly against the shameful oppression in which the noblesse held the unhappy third estate of the people'; and as one of the twelve clerical representatives at the Provincial Assembly of Orléans, studying questions of taxation, agriculture, commerce, and poor relief, he soon found himself standing with another scientifically minded deputy, Lavoisier, for a policy of radical reform. 'What a social order that must be,' he often complained, 'when the

permanence of the fourteenth century is fixed in the midst of the progress of the eighteenth!' This humane sympathy for the wrongs of the poor reinforced his philosophic impatience with a chaotic society and an impotent government, and threw him, as enthusiastically as his donnish temperament permitted, into the Revolution. So he became Mirabeau's acknowledged master, the reputed inspirer of Robespierre, and the constitutional architect of Bonapartism.

As the 1780's went on, without any real progress towards reform; when every demand of the poor seemed to be blocked by privilege and prescriptive right, and every good intention of the King to be headed off by a reactionary Court; Sieyès was attracted, like many of his contemporaries, by the idea of emigration to a land where it was supposed that there was no Court, no privilege, and no poverty. He had saved up nearly 50,000 livres, and was upon the point of sailing to America, when the political storm burst, and he faced, willingly enough, the greatest opportunity that a philosopher ever had of putting his principles into practice.

II

In 1788 Necker announced that the States-General would meet early in the next year, and invited public discussion of the situation. The Press was flooded with pamphlets. Sieyès, who had reached his fortieth year without breaking his philosophic silence, was moved to write, and found that he had the gift of lucid expression. His two first pamphlets did not catch popular attention, but the third, issued in January, 1789, with the clever title, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?*, at once made history; for it made the National Assembly, and was (says Lord Acton) 'as rich in consequences as the Ninety-five Theses of Wittenberg.' In the famous debate of June 15–16, which decided that there

should be a revolution, most of the talking was done by Mirabeau, but most of the ideas came from Sieyès' pamphlet. It was in the course of these sessions that Arthur Young heard Sieyès speak 'ungracefully and ineloquently, but logically,' and noted his 'remarkable physiognomy, and quick rolling eye.' And from this moment, though his voice was weak, and his manner cold, he was always attended to. Mirabeau's 'There is then one man in France!', and the series of letters in which he addresses Sieyès as '*Mon maître*,' show that his better-known tribute in June, 1790, was sincere. Sieyès' calculated audacity—Mounier says that the Tennis Court oath was devised to block his bolder suggestion of an appeal to Paris—and his gift for finding the *mot juste* for every phase of the Revolution—'Gentlemen (on June 23rd), do you not feel that you are to-day all that you were yesterday?'—gave him a popular as well as a parliamentary reputation. And, so long as there was work that he could do, he would do it—in July backing Mirabeau's protest against the summoning of troops to Paris, and hitting upon the idea of the National Guard; in August helping to reject a doctrine of representation which would have stopped the work of the Assembly; and in September laying the foundation for those new administrative divisions of France which became the basis of national unity. But his uncompromising mind was not made for the give and take of political life. He was too honest, and too indifferent as to what people might think of him, to join in the scramble for power, or in the manœuvres of party politics. His sense of justice was offended by the provisions of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. 'They want to be free,' he said, 'but they know not how to be fair.' And with this epigram he went back to his books.

During 1790 he was less seen in the House than at the ''89 Club,' which he had helped Condorcet to found, for 'the study and application of the social art'—Sieyès' usual name for his favourite science—or at the 'Cercle Social,' which published the *Bouche de Fer*, or at Brissot's 'Amis

des Noirs.' But in June, 1790, on the anniversary of his first political exploit, he was elected, rather unwillingly, President of the Assembly and of the Jacobin Club. He was, indeed, recognized by now as the foremost political thinker of the Revolution—a revolutionist, because he believed in the right of the people to revolt against oppression; a monarchist, because he thought monarchy the best security for freedom; and a democrat, because he held by the ultimate sovereignty of the people. But, as he agreed with Voltaire that the tyranny of many might well be worse than the tyranny of one, he stood not only for a limited monarchy, but also for a limited democracy—for the disfranchisement of the poor, for indirect election, and for a system of filling up vacancies in the House without an appeal to the country. Safety from oppression, he always maintained, lay in a balance of power, and all his constitutions resembled those piled-up figures and brackets of algebraical formulæ, which are apt to end, in the right-hand margin, with '= 0.'

The first set-back in Sieyès' career came in 1791. When Mirabeau died on April 2, those friends of the King who had been trying to mould his mercurial policy, and who had for the last ten months purchased Mirabeau's advice, looked about for a successor. Governeur Morris had urged Talleyrand to play the part of Mark Antony. But only Sieyès had the necessary reputation for honesty, courage, and clear-headedness. He was known to be discontented with the new leaders and the recent developments of the Revolution. La Marck, the faithful servant of an unfaithful master, Montmorin, a weak but willing minister, and Cabanis, Mirabeau's doctor, fresh from his death-bed, believed that the 'master' might consent to carry on the work of his disciple—might write, at least, another of his famous pamphlets in favour of what they called 'the revision of the Constitution.' Sieyès, sounded by Cabanis, consented, on condition that the King showed his intention 'to put himself decidedly and irrevocably at the head of the Revo-

lution,' and to form a new and competent Ministry. But in truth he can have had little hope either that these conditions would be fulfilled—he knew the King too well—or that any number of pamphlets, in the summer of 1791, could save the monarchy. For at this very moment the stupid and ineffective King was outwitting them all, and preparing a stroke destined to bring many of his opponents, with himself, to the scaffold. While Sieyès was collecting signatures for his 'Voluntary Declaration' of June 17—it was, in effect, a *ballon d'essai* for his revision policy—Louis was preparing disguises and false passports for his flight to Varennes. When he was brought back a prisoner on the 25th, Sieyès' policy was wrecked. After two letters to the *Moniteur* declaring for monarchy against the republicanism of Thomas Paine and his friends, he retired into that philosophic silence from which he had emerged three years before. The first part of his career was over.

During the next three years, from July, 1791, to July, 1794, the happiest man was the man who had no history. When they asked Sieyès afterwards what he had done during this period, when Paris passed through all the experiences of insurrection and massacre, of war at home and abroad, of poverty, famine, and the guillotine, he answered simply, '*J'ai vécu*'—'I survived.' It would, indeed, be a gross exaggeration of the Terror to suppose that life was at any time unsafe for those who lived quietly, kept out of politics, and did not correspond with Royalist refugees. The life of Paris went on much as usual. The quarrels of Jacobin and Girondin were viewed with increasing indifference. The cafés and theatres were crowded, as the carts passed to and from the guillotine. In a population of three-quarters of a million few felt themselves in danger of proscription; and there were priests and aristocrats who came untouched out of the Terror. But, as revolutionary opinion moved on from stage to stage; as the Liberals of 1789 became the Conservatives of 1791, the Liberals of 1791 the Conservatives of 1792, and the Liberals

of 1793 the Conservatives of 1794; when Mirabeau, buried in the Pantheon as a patriot of 1791, was disinterred to make room for Marat, the patriot of 1794; when the Girondin leaders, who headed a national war in 1791–2, were executed as traitors in 1793; when Danton, twice the saviour of his country in 1792–3, was put to death as a counter-revolutionary in 1794; when accusations of *incivisme* became the common coin of party politics, and there was no appeal from an arbitrary tribunal except to a despotic committee; when patriotism took on the character of a fanatical religion, and was ready to sacrifice every affection on the altar of the country—then it required an extreme degree either of indifference or of courage to take a prominent part in public life. These conditions, too, arose gradually, thus enticing their victims on with the fascination of playing with fire, till they were involved in disasters which they could hardly have foreseen; and it was not only the stupidest, but also the finest characters which were the most likely to succumb.

Sieyès had no mind to be a martyr, and took unheroic precautions to keep out of sight. During the autumn of 1791 he lived outside Paris; by the end of July, 1792, he was sixty leagues away; and he took no part in the events of August 10. He only came back in September because he was elected, against his will, a member of the Convention —an honour that it seemed less dangerous to accept than to decline. But the period which followed was the most inglorious of his life, for it was spent in avoiding responsibility, and in evading the logical consequences of his own past. He gave up the attempt to instruct his contemporaries, and even the belief that they were worth instructing. 'Woe to the teacher!' he writes. 'Men want to be pleased, and will let you flatter them; but they will not put up with education.' 'Let us hold our tongues' became his refrain. A member of the Constitutional Committee, and none more fit to direct it, he contributed hardly anything to the Constitution of 1793. A member of the Committee of

General Defence, he drafted a single report on the Ministry of War. He voted in as few words as possible for the death of the King, whom he had been ready to serve eighteen months before. He made no protest against the proscription of the Girondin leaders, with whom he had been on friendly terms the previous year. Only on the safe Committee of Education he found congenial work, and did it well, drawing up a comprehensive scheme for primary and secondary schools on curiously modern lines, and a plan for semi-religious festivals, such as 'a feast of animals' and 'a feast of the visible universe,' which seems to have inspired Robespierre's better known Religion of the Supreme Being. He never sank lower than when he spoke in the Convention on November 11, 1793, in support of the anti-clerical demonstrations of the 'Feast of Reason.' 'Are you not astonished,' wrote an old English acquaintance, Sir Samuel Romilly, 'to see Sieyès in all this, standing up in the midst of his fellow-murderers, and claiming applause for his having so long ago thought like a philosopher? Ill as I long thought of him, I did not imagine him capable of such degradation.' To make himself doubly secure, Sieyès gave his clerical stipend of 1,000 livres as a subscription to the national treasury. The rest is silence, and the drawn blinds of the house in the rue St. Honoré. But there exists a copy of some verses recommending the quiet life, by the side of which Sieyès has jotted down, to relieve his mind, classical quotations appropriate to the Terror: '*Jusque datum sceleri*' (crime was punished), *Ruit irrevocabile vulgus*' (the mob has the bit in its teeth), and the like; together with a scrap of paper containing some caustic remarks on a meeting (as it seems) of the Committee of Public Safety, and on a speaker who can hardly be other than Robespierre. Once only, on the eve of Thermidor, he was delated to the Jacobin Club, and saved—he was fond of telling the story—by his cobbler, who said that he was no politician, and lived among his books: 'I mend his boots, and I can answer for him.'

III

The fall of Robespierre in July, 1794, and the destruction of the Paris commune, did not end the Terror so completely as is sometimes supposed, and the political weather of Thermidor remained treacherous for weak constitutions. Sieyès need no longer draw down his blinds as the tumbrils went past, or suffer from 'sinister dreams' in which (as Dumont suggested) 'he saw his head rolling on his own carpet.' He accepted a place on the Committee of Legislation, and even sat, most unwillingly, on the Commission of Inquiry that transported some of the remaining Terrorists. But it was not until March, 1795, that his return to public life, cleverly prepared by the autobiographical pamphlet, *Notice sur la vie de Sieyès*, was signalled by his appearance on the reconstituted Committee of Public Safety. Here at last 'the artist of human affairs had half Europe for his canvas,' and everything that he designed had a ready sale. On March 8 he asked for the reinstatement of the Girondist members, and it was agreed. On March 21 he carried through the House at a single sitting a coercive law against Jacobins and Royalists. In May he concluded a treaty with Holland. On July 4 he introduced an elaborate specimen of his political algebra, which became the Constitution of 1795. Three times he helped the Convention to victory over the forces of disorder, and it was he who, according to the account that Napoleon dictated to Gourgaud, called upon the future Emperor, on the thirteenth Vendémiaire, to save the country by his genius and by his guns.

At this time Sieyès was forty-six, and still had nearly half his life to live. His later career under the Directory and Consulate—as a member of the Five Hundred, as Director, Plenipotentiary, Consul, and Senator—made European history. More and more silent under the Empire—the silences of Sieyès were barometer readings, showing the

weight of the political atmosphere—and for fifteen years an exile under the Restoration, he returned to Paris in 1830 for the last six years of his life—a legendary figure, a faded relic of an age that seemed almost as far away as the days of Louis XV. What were his thoughts at the end of it all? 'Were it not curious to know,' writes Carlyle in 1834, 'how Sieyès in these days (for he is said to be still alive) looks out on all that Constitutional masonry, through the rheumy soberness of extreme age? Might we hope, still with the old irrefragable transcendentalism?' St. Beuve, who had an opportunity of reading a mass of Sieyès' still unpublished correspondence, was struck by the contrast between the adulatory tones in which he was addressed, by all manner of people, during the time of his power, and his own unbroken distrust and dislike of human nature. 'I detest society,' he wrote at this time, 'because no one in society believes in moral goodness. . . . Talk to them of intrigue, and they will understand; but spend a life-time in working for their happiness, and they will merely wonder whether you are worth including in one of their villainous cliques.' Not that he was unequal to the party struggle. 'While they cheat me by lying, I cheat them back,' he said, 'by telling the truth.' But he was utterly disillusioned. Like Danton, but in more donnish language, he would have said, 'I am sick of men.' He had not only been disgusted by his company during the Revolution; he had also been frightened. When, in 1832, his mind was weakened by illness, he told his valet: 'If M. Robespierre calls, I am not at home.' He is said to have cried out in his dreams, '*Éloignez de moi cet infâme!*'

Yet he deserved to have, and doubtless enjoyed, prouder and pleasanter thoughts. Never designed by nature for the Church, he had yet performed the 'priestlike task' of baptizing and burying the Revolution. For Sieyès created the National Assembly, and was the first Frenchman (so he claims) to cry '*Vive la Nation*'; and yet it was he who, only

ten years later, wrapped dead and dishonoured liberty in the Constitution of Brumaire, and laid it in a Bonapartist grave.

In both those acts he did well by his country, and did so because he was human enough to forget, for the moment, that he was a philosopher, and to allow the need of the moment to override his reasoned theories. Napoleon was right, as usual, when he remarked, of Brumaire, 'It may have distressed Sieyès to find me a stumbling-block in the way of his metaphysical ideas; but he came to realize the necessity that somebody should govern, and he preferred me to anyone else.' Sieyès' weakness was, as with so many people, the quality upon which he most prided himself—his philosophic detachment. He may not have said, as Dumont asserts, 'The science of government is one that I think I have mastered'; though Governeur Morris, who met him at dinner, says that he talked very confidently on the subject, 'turning up his nose at everything said or written about it before him,' and we have Lord Brougham's story of how at Brussels, in 1817, Sieyès provided him, unasked, with a complete policy for the English parliamentary Opposition: but he certainly believed that politics is a science whose principles are capable of reasoned exposition, and an art by which they can be expressed in laws and institutions; and it never ceased to distress him when men rejected his philosophy, or when, in practice, his principles did not work. 'The influence of reason,' he wrote sadly, 'is a phenomenon which few men are able to appreciate. The love of humanity, the desire for a perfect society, and the passionate attachment of the upright mind to objects of such grandeur as these, are beyond their moral reach: they cannot believe in them. They do not even understand that political science (*l'art social*) can win the attention and rouse the enthusiasm of artists in philosophy just as the musician, the painter, and the architect are absorbed by the charm of painting, the taste for beautiful buildings, or the search for perfect harmony.' Such was

Sieyès' faith; and, to practise it, he withdrew into the solitude which is at the centre of every man's heart who worships beauty or truth. It must have been, during those last years, a very empty place. All Sieyès' powers, like those which he had balanced in his Constitutions, had cancelled out. 'My sight, my hearing, my memory, and my speech,' he told his friends, 'have all gone. I have become a pure negation.'

'There were no religious rites at his funeral,' writes his biographer, 'but they praised him over his grave. A plain little classical structure, a sort of shrine, marks the spot in Père Lachaise. Another generation has placed in the shrine symbols of the religion that he rejected, and of the Church that he despised. No public monument has ever been built to his memory, and no party in France looks back on his career with pride.' The Royalists could never forgive him for becoming a Revolutionary, or the clericals for renouncing his Orders. The men of 1789 hated him as a republican, and the republicans who opposed Napoleon hated him as a renegade. Mounier said that 'If you took off the mask of metaphysics with which he loved to hide his inner thought, you found a soul devoured by jealousy and covetousness.' Mallet du Pan described him, more shortly, as 'Catiline in a clerical collar.' But Talleyrand and Carnot, two of the ablest of his contemporaries, maintained that France owed to him three inestimable boons—the National Assembly, the National Guard, and the Departmental System—and called him 'the most representative man of his age.' It is a true epitaph, and does him honour.

MIRABEAU

HONORÉ GABRIEL RIQUETI, COMTE DE MIRABEAU

1749 March 9, born at Bignon.

1767 Cavalry commission.

1772 Married Marie Émilie de Marignane.
Essai sur le despotisme.

1775 Affair with 'Sophie' de Monnier.
Avis aux Hessois.

1777 *Le Lecteur y mettra titre.*
Imprisonment at Vincennes till 1780.

1782 *Des lettres de cachet.*

1784-5 Visit to England.

1786-7 Two visits to Prussia.

1787 *Dénonciation de l'agiotage.*

1788 *De la monarchie prussienne.*

1789 *Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin.*
Manifeste à la nation provençale.
Avis au peuple marseillais.
Elected deputy to States-General by Tiers-État of Aix.

1791 April 2, died at Paris, æt. 42.

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MIRABEAU

from a painting by Couderc at Versailles

MIRABEAU

I

THERE is an extreme contrast between the revolutionary careers of Mirabeau and of Sieyès. If Sieyès revolved round the central fire, and was only a little scorched by it at one point of his orbit, Mirabeau, trailing clouds of infamy, plunged into it, and was consumed. None of the men whom we are to consider played a shorter part in the drama of the Revolution, or a more forcible one. If the term 'leader' has any application during the period, it is to Mirabeau. If Mirabeau was not great, no one was, till Napoleon.

Honoré Gabriel Riqueti was born at Bignon, near Nemours, on March 9, 1749. He came of a heroic stock, and was an almost fabulous infant; for he is said to have been born with two teeth, to have beaten his nurse at the age of three, and to have shown in early childhood that excess of vitality which drove most of his family to the extremes either of virtue or of vice. It was so to the end. In his last illness the doctor used to ask after the state of his hair: if he was better, it stood stiff and curly; if he was worse, it lay soft and flat on his head.

Mirabeau's great-grandfather had entertained Louis XIV, and been made a Marquis for it: his grandfather had been so badly wounded at Cassano—'that was the battle,' he used to say, 'in which I lost my life'—that he went about ever afterwards with his right arm in a sling, and his head supported by a silver stock. One uncle had fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy, and had served the sister of Frederick the Great. Another, after a distinguished career in the Navy, achieved a colonial governorship, and barely missed the Ministry of Marine. His father, the Marquis,

after a dissipated youth in the army, had settled down as a philosophic farmer, and written books full of new-fangled ideas on taxation and social reform, which earned him (from the people) the title of 'The Friend of Men,' and (from the Government) compulsory rustication to the village where Honoré was born.

The boy grew up true to the family type—pugnacious, amorous, adventurous, with a passion for learning and a passion for creating. Like the young Napoleon, the young Mirabeau read books in barracks, and meditated a work on Corsica. With a face disfigured by small-pox, but with charming manners and a head full of ideas, he learnt to quarrel with his family, and to make friends with every stranger he met. 'It was impossible to know him,' said Dumont, 'and not to be fascinated by his talents and engaging manners.' Married to an unattractive heiress at twenty-three, he soon ran into debt, broke with his wife, and found himself in prison. Here his energy of mind forced an outlet in a treatise on salt-mines, and an essay on despotism; and his physical vitality in a love affair with 'Sophie' de Monnier, the misunderstood wife of a neighbouring nobleman. Flying with Sophie to Holland, he found himself convicted of the crime of abduction, sentenced *in absentia* to lose his head (the execution was carried out in effigy), and brought back to imprisonment at Vincennes.

Vincennes was to Mirabeau what Küstrin had been to Frederick the Great. It did not alter his character, but turned it in a new direction. It did not teach him to discipline his bodily desires—that was a lesson he never learned—but it gave him mental ambitions which disputed their supremacy. His lower nature had monopolized him; now it held only half the field. During the whole time of his imprisonment he wrote furiously. But whereas he began by producing works of sentimental rhetoric and impropriety, such as the *Letters to Sophie*, and *Ma Conversion*, he ended with the *Des lettres de cachet*,

a learned and eloquent attack on the prison system under which he was suffering. And when he was free again, though his name got fresh notoriety from three scandalous law-suits, and though he deserted Sophie for Mme de Nehra, and Mme de Nehra for Mme Lejay, yet he impressed those who met him, and who were not disposed to overlook his moral faults, as a man of honour and high ideals. This is particularly true of the friends he made during a visit to England in 1784–5. 'I had such frequent opportunities of seeing him at this time,' writes Sir Samuel Romilly, a witness of the highest repute, 'and afterwards at a much more important period of his life, that I think his character was well known to me. I doubt whether it has been so well known to the world, and I am convinced that a great injustice has been done him. . . . His vanity was certainly excessive, but I have no doubt that, in his public conduct as well as in his writings, he was desirous of doing good, that his ambition was of the noblest kind, and that he proposed to himself the noblest ends.' Mirabeau was, indeed, in his happiest mood during this visit to England. He spent most of the time in London, seeing the usual sights, meeting the right people, and putting on paper his opinions about everything and everybody. Feeling melancholy one day, because his mistress was absent, he went the round of the London hospitals, and was moved by what he saw to draw up some very sensible suggestions for reform, especially in the treatment of children. He was interested in Parliament, and took particular note of the rules of procedure in the Commons, which he afterwards tried in vain to introduce into the National Assembly. He also had a close and not entirely pleasant experience of English justice, when he sued his secretary, Hardy, for the theft of some of his clothes and papers. After a careful hearing Hardy was acquitted; but the judge said that the prosecution was justified; and Mirabeau was so impressed with the working of the jury system that he never ceased to urge its adoption in his own country. Once he visited

Oxford, and wrote that 'Nature seemed to have formed this asylum expressly for the delightful enjoyment of study for the active tranquillity of letters and arts. . . . In the streets,' he reports, 'you scarcely see anyone save professors and students wearing black gowns and scarfs, and on their heads a square, flat cap—the kind of tuft which is in the middle looking like a nail that has been driven through this little black board into their learned heads.'

One other incident may be mentioned, for the light it throws on a curious side of Mirabeau's character. It is a letter to Romilly, who was out of town at the moment, describing a dispute between himself and Gibbon at Lord Lansdowne's house in London. Now, Mirabeau was very fond of provoking arguments, and did not mind what he said—on one occasion he was so rude to Wilkes that only the latter's tact prevented an open quarrel. But this particular scene cannot have taken place, because Gibbon was at that time in Switzerland. Romilly, who reports the incident, does not know what to make of it. But it squares with an unscrupulousness, a lack of moral sense in certain matters, of which there were other examples in Mirabeau's conduct at this time.

For as soon as he left England he plunged back into his quarrelsome past, and was immersed in political pamphleteering. 'I have travelled 300 leagues,' he writes to Romilly on his return to Paris, 'composed, printed, struck off, and stitched 2,000 copies of 300 pages each. . . . This book (it was a work on banking, inspired by Clavière) has been written, printed in a foreign country, brought back and got ready for distribution, all in less than five weeks. My journey, somewhat rapid, as you see, was in a country where the slightest thing which had betrayed me would have sent me to the gallows or the stake.' There followed, at great pressure, four more treatises on finance; two visits to Berlin, during the second of which—a semi-official mission—he sent home seventy despatches in six months, and composed a full-length work on the Prussian monarchy;

and an attack on Calonne, under the guise of a treatise on stock-jobbing, which got him an enemy as well as a reputation. It was in this atmosphere of irritation and overwork that Mirabeau committed three literary crimes which it is particularly hard to forgive, because they had so strong a motive in money, and so little excuse in passion. He published as a posthumous work of Turgot a memoir of Dupont's on Provincial Assemblies which he had already sold to Calonne as a composition of his own. He printed, as an attack upon Necker, and at a time when he was asking for pecuniary help from Necker's Government, a number of private letters. And, under the catch-title of *A Secret History of the Court of Berlin*, he published to all the world the confidential despatches which he had supplied to the Foreign Office during his mission to Prussia. This last scandal occurred in January, 1789, and came close to wrecking his career. He sank so low as to be 'cut' by Talleyrand. He was only saved by the outbreak of the Revolution.

II

How did Mirabeau appear to the world at the opening of his political career? This is how he struck an observer at a smart dinner-party at Versailles. 'He had a tall, square, heavy figure. The abnormally large size of his head was exaggerated by a mass of curled and powdered hair. He wore evening dress with enormous buttons of coloured stone; and the buckles of his shoes were equally large. His whole costume was noticeable for an exaggerated fashionableness which was hardly in the taste of the best society. His features were disfigured by the marks of small-pox. He had a reserved expression, but his eyes were full of fire. Trying to be polite, he bowed too low, and his first words were pretentious and rather tasteless compliments. In a word, he had neither the manner nor the speech of the company in which he found himself.' His

birth was as good as any of theirs; but in his Bohemian life he had unlearnt the ways of the West End.

What character did he commonly bear? That of a man without moral scruples, who would stick at nothing to make money, or to win a woman; a quarrelsome, conceited fellow, with a loud voice and an overbearing manner; an aristocrat who dressed like an actor, and could not be trusted to behave like a gentleman; but endowed with a magnetic force of body and mind which conquered or charmed by mere proximity; and with a knowledge of the world, and a power of mastering affairs, which were without rival among his contemporaries. His scarred face was the symbol of his scarred character: but as the one could not be overlooked in society, so neither could the other fail to fix its mark upon the world.

But Mirabeau would have to live down his past, and to conquer a host of suspicions and prejudices; he would have to make his own career by sheer ability and perseverance. It would not be easy, and he knew it. 'It is a proud and difficult task,' he wrote during the first days of the Assembly, 'that I have undertaken to achieve a career of public service without courting any political party, and without worshipping the idol of the hour; with no weapon but reason and truth—those, and those alone, the objects of my friendship and respect, their enemies my enemies; and recognizing no king but conscience, and no judge but time. So be it! Perhaps I shall fall in the enterprise, but at least I shall not retreat.'

Mirabeau, with his reputation, could not hope to sit in the States-General as a representative of the Noblesse. But, under the convenient rule that allowed members of the other Orders to sit for the Commons, he appealed to his own people in the south—the *Manifeste à la nation provençale* and the *Avis au peuple marseillais* were part of his electioneering campaign—and was elected by the Third Estate both of Aix and of Marseilles. He chose to sit for Aix, and set out for Versailles.

Here he at once plunged into the dangerous situation created by the dual struggle between the Lords and Commons, the Parliament and the Crown. Each section of the Lords—that is, the representatives of the Clergy and the Noblesse—claimed to verify their mandates, to discuss the matters mentioned in the King's speech, and to vote upon them, *alone*. The Commons claimed that, as they had been given the same number of representatives as the nobility and clergy taken together, the old division into three Houses no longer held good; all three must verify together, and vote together, that is, by head; and until the Lords agreed to this course, the Commons would refuse to do any business at all. Meanwhile, the Crown, which had summoned Parliament in order to raise money, and was prepared to bribe it with a programme of moderate reform, found itself encumbered with three debating societies, each busy about its own grievances, and threatened by a rising tide of opinion in favour of the Commons. Soon it was no longer a question of moderate reform, but of a new Constitution: obstruction was passing into rebellion, and rebellion into revolution.

How did Mirabeau react to this situation? He was a Royalist, but one who believed that the authority of the Crown should rest on the sovereignty of the people. He thought monarchy the most efficient as well as the most congenial form of government for his country; but he considered that it would be more effective and more popular if limited by a frank recognition of the rights of Parliament and the people—if it were no longer arbitrary, but constitutional. He saw the danger of missing the opportunity for such a settlement. 'I tremble for the royal authority,' he had written to Montmorin as early as December, 1788, 'which was never so necessary as at a moment when it is on the verge of ruin. There was never a crisis more full of embarrassment, or offering more pretexts for licence. Never was the coalition of the privileged Orders more threatening for the King, or more formidable to

the nation. No National Assembly ever threatened to be so stormy as that which will decide the fate of the monarchy, and which is gathering in such haste, and with so much mutual distrust.' He soon came to the conclusion that the King's advisers were incompetent to deal with the situation. 'If Necker had had an ounce of talent he could have secured 60 millions' worth of taxes and 150 millions' worth of loans within a week, and the next day have dissolved the Assembly. If he had a shred of character, his position would be unassailable: he would be marching by our side, instead of deserting our cause, which is also his own; he would play Richelieu's part with the Court, and regenerate the nation.'

This leadership, which Necker let slip, Mirabeau was to grasp, and to make his own. It seemed, indeed, at first, very unlikely that he would succeed. 'In every company, of every rank,' reports Arthur Young, 'you hear of the Comte de Mirabeau's talents; that he is one of the first pens in France, and the first orator; and yet that he could not carry, from confidence, six votes on any question in the States.' But every incident during the summer of 1789 strengthened his hold on the House, and his repute with the people—June 17, when he helped Sieyès to turn the Commons into the National Assembly; June 23, when, in the name of the Assembly, he defied the King's representative—'Go and tell those who sent you that we are here by the will of the people, and that we cannot be moved hence save by force of bayonets!'; July 15, when he demanded the withdrawal of the troops that were menacing the Assembly; August 10, when, having been absent on the famous night of the 4th, he supported the suppression of clerical tithes; September 24, when he championed Necker's financial proposals; and October 30, when he made a great speech on the confiscation of the property of the Church. 'It is no good pretending,' said Malouet, 'that Mirabeau was not the mainspring of power in the National Assembly. His great quality was courage, which added

strength to his talents, directed their employment, and developed their force. Whatever his moral reputation may have been, when circumstances brought him to the front he grew in stature, he redeemed his character, and then his genius rose to the summit of courage and virtue.'

But it was at this moment, when it seemed that he might become master of the Assembly, and mould the Revolution into the shape he desired, that his career received a fatal set-back, and the Revolution experienced an aberration from which it never recovered. This was the decree of November 9, which laid it down that no member of the Assembly could be also a minister of the Crown. The decree was passed by a snap vote on a side-issue. But it would not have been reversed by longer consideration; for it represented a general conviction that there could be no honest alliance between Parliament and the Crown, as well as a particular suspicion that if Mirabeau were a Minister, he would soon be a Dictator too. The objection to Ministers as liaison officers between Parliament and the Crown rested partly on the theoretical division between the legislative and executive functions of government which Montesquieu had made an axiom of French political science, and partly on the belief engrained by sad experience that the King's Ministry was a stronghold of arbitrary government, and an enemy of the people. The feeling about Mirabeau was not merely that he had shown—as, for instance, in his support of the royal veto—a tendency to exalt the power of the Crown at the expense of that of the people, but also that he took too much upon himself, and that his manner was increasingly dictatorial. 'Mirabeau has lost ground in the Assembly,' wrote Dumont in December, 'whether from the intrigues of his enemies, or from the torrents of libels poured forth against him, or from the continual faults into which he is drawn by his impetuous disposition, his rage for domination, and that impatient ambition which has been its own betrayer. The idea of seeing him a Minister could not be endured.'

There was also a more definite suspicion—a suspicion, in fact, well grounded—that he was being consulted by the King's friends, and was giving them his paid advice. Under all these circumstances it is not surprising that a body of men who had just shaken off one yoke should be fearful of falling under another, or that the jealousies and resentments roused by Mirabeau's domineering personality should have expressed themselves in a veto on his Ministry. Nevertheless, the decree was a serious mistake. It forced Mirabeau to make a secret treaty instead of an open alliance with the King ; and it rendered almost impossible any close or friendly co-operation between the Assembly which framed laws and the Ministers who executed them. It was through this gap between legislation and administration that the governing power of the Revolution gradually leaked away.

III

Mirabeau, we have said, was already in consultation with the Court, as to the possibility of saving the executive power of the Crown; for in this, more and more, he saw the one hope of saving the country. On October 15 he had sent to the Comte de Provence a memorandum based on the events of October 5–6; and on June 1, 1790, began that series of fifty 'Notes' to the Court which form the nucleus of the *Correspondance entre le comte de Mirabeau et le comte de La Marck*—one of the most interesting and important collections of political documents ever published.

What is the policy that Mirabeau suggests? The essence of it is there from the first, in the memorandum of October 15, 1789. The King has been brought from Versailles to Paris, and is shut up in the Tuileries. The Assembly has followed him, and is debating under the eyes of the Paris mob. Is the King free? No. He cannot leave Paris. He is

exposed to all the commotions of the capital, at a time when winter is coming on, with its special dangers of poverty and famine. What will the city be like in three months' time? 'Certainly a hospital, perhaps a theatre of horrors.' There is the added danger of a struggle, perhaps a civil war, between Paris and the provinces, where the commercial and agricultural constituencies are already showing their resentment at the extent to which the financial interests of the capital dominate the Assembly. This is a point to which Mirabeau returns more than once in the correspondence; and it is important, because it shows that the main cause of the later quarrel between the Jacobins and the Girondins was present from the earliest days of the Revolution. Mirabeau, with his insistence on the 'profound immorality' of Paris, its 'disdain of landed property, and its insatiable desire to overturn and annex and plunder everything,' was, in effect, the first 'federalist.' In the face of all these difficulties the King has no competent Ministers, no money in the Treasury, and no support in public opinion; while the Assembly grows day by day more unpopular. What is Mirabeau's remedy? He would have the King retire from Paris to one of the provincial capitals—Rouen would be the best, because it is loyal, rich, populous, and well-situated for organizing the north-western provinces—and from thence appeal against the Assembly to the whole nation, in the name of 'the peace and safety of the State, and the indivisibility of King and people.' This plan Mirabeau never gave up—though in the constantly shifting events of the next eighteen months he enlarged it and varied it in several directions. It always seemed to him the most effective way for the King to assert his freedom, and to recover his executive power.

It was in May, 1790, that Mirabeau was definitely approached by Mercy d'Argenteau and La Marck on behalf of the Court, and that, in return for a monthly stipend, and the ultimate payment of his debts, he undertook to advise

the King, and to work for him in the Assembly on the lines that he had already laid down. Is it necessary to defend Mirabeau for making this bargain? He was, as always, in need of money. His only marketable possession, besides his wits, was his library, of which some fifty or sixty volumes were, he tells us, 'of special beauty and rarity,' and which we can understand his not wishing to sell. And though he kept his books, and sold his services, yet he did not sell his conscience: for the policy which, at any rate for the present, he prescribed to the Court was the same policy which he would in any case have recommended in the Assembly. Perhaps no member of the House, except Robespierre, would have refused the offer; and it was jealousy that sharpened their suspicion of the bribe. But later, as we shall see, the situation changed, and a bargain that it would have been wiser and honester never to make involved both parties to it in treachery to their country.

Mirabeau's first concern was for allies. Montmorin, Mercy, and La Marck were zealous, but of no political weight. He had given up expecting anything from Necker, who faded away early in September, 1790. But perhaps he might make an ally of Lafayette—that stiff, stupid man, who lived on his reputation as a friend of Washington, and fancied himself a second Cromwell, because he was the King's warder and commander of the National Guard. Mirabeau twice appealed for his support in the early summer of 1790. Outlining the dangers which threatened the State, and the divided condition of public opinion, he urged that 'if it were impossible to reunite men through opinions, it might still be possible to reunite opinions through men.' When reasoning failed to move Lafayette, he tried flattery. The situation, he said, had passed beyond the means of the old diplomacy. Neither wit, nor memory, nor social qualities can avail; no conceivable committee can help us now; only 'organized thought, the inspirations of genius, and the omnipotence of character.' 'Oh, M. de

Lafayette!' he cries, 'Richelieu was Richelieu for the Court against the nation; and though he did much harm to public liberty, yet he did the monarchy a tolerable amount of good. Be another Richelieu, with the Court, and for the nation; and you will restore the monarchy at the same time as you enlarge and consolidate public freedom. But (he goes on) Richelieu had his Capucin Father Joseph; and unless you too have your *Éminence grise* you will ruin yourself without saving us. Your qualities and mine are complementary.' But Lafayette was too priggish to co-operate with a man of no moral reputation, and too conceited to abandon that glorious isolation in which, as Mirabeau told him, he lived 'entirely surrounded by himself.' Nearly a year later a final attempt was made by Emmery to bring the two together on a basis of 'public peace and social order'; but it too failed. Mirabeau's disappointment is evident in the attacks on Lafayette contained in the Notes of June 1 and 20.

Meanwhile the political situation was rapidly changing. The Constitution of 1791 was taking shape, and the King must determine his attitude towards it. In Mirabeau's third Note, written on July 3, the day of his only interview with the Court, he does not withdraw from his view as to the necessity of strengthening the executive power of the Crown, but he tries to show the King how much stronger in many ways his position is under the new *régime* than it was under the old. 'Before the Revolution the King's authority was incomplete, because it had no legal basis; inadequate, because it rested on compulsion rather than opinion; and uncertain, because it could be overturned by a revolution which was always imminent. The King had to consult the interests of the nobility, to negotiate with the clergy, to bargain with the *Parlements*, and to load the Court with favours.' His legislative power did not help him to rule; his power of taxation made him unpopular; and he got the blame for the arbitrary rule of his Ministers. Now these obstacles have been swept away. 'In the

course of a single year liberty has triumphed over more prejudices that obstructed the royal power, crushed more enemies of the throne, and secured more sacrifices for the national welfare, than the royal authority could possibly have done in several centuries.' The one effective weapon the King had, and the one he must never lose, is control of the administration. 'To administer is to govern, and to govern is to reign: that is the whole matter.' And the secret of administration is to have public opinion on your side.

This Note is not a piece of special pleading, but a true and statesmanlike view of the facts. Much of what Louis was struggling to keep had ceased to be worth having, and much of what he was refusing to accept would make his position stronger. It was not too late to sever his connection with the party of reaction, to appeal to the loyal mass of the people, and to take his place as a patriot King at the head of the Revolution. By loyally accepting the Constitution he might get the power to revise it, and to regain fuller executive control.

In a later Note, Mirabeau returns to this subject, and outlines his revised Constitution. 'Royalty hereditary in the Bourbon dynasty; a permanent legislative body elected periodically, and limited to the function of law-making; the executive power centralized and extended so as to be supreme over everything that concerns the administration of the kingdom, the execution of the laws, and the command of the army; the legislative body to have sole control of taxation; the country to be re-divided; free justice, liberty of the Press, responsibility of Ministers; sale of the Crown and Church estates; a Civil List; and the abolition of class distinctions, privileges, exemptions from taxation, feudalism, the *Parlements*, aristocratic and clerical corporations, *pays d'état*, and provincial bodies—that (he says) is what I mean by the basis of the Constitution.'

Now, up to about the middle of the summer of 1790 there was a reasonable hope that this programme might be

realized, and Mirabeau's suggestions for realizing it contained nothing inconsistent with patriotism, or with his rôle as a parliamentary leader. But from about the time of the sixteenth Note (August 13) there is a noticeable change of tone, as though the situation had grown too urgent for moderate remedies, and as though more drastic measures were required. What had happened? No specifically new disease had appeared, but an aggravation of the symptoms already present. Perhaps Mirabeau's interview with the King and Queen on July 3, deeply as it affected his feelings—Madame Campan says that, as he kissed the Queen's hand upon leaving, he exclaimed, 'Madame, the monarchy is saved!'—yet convinced him, upon cool reflection, that they could never play the part that he had assigned to them. Already, six months before, he had broken out into complaints of the Court: 'What woolgatherers they are! what bunglers! how cowardly! how reckless! what a grotesque mixture of old ideas and new projects, of petty scruples and childish whims, of willing this and nilling that (*volontés et nolontés*), of abortive loves and hates!' He had, perhaps, hoped against hope that this impression was wrong: now he knew that it was right. There were other reasons for urgency. Winter was once more in sight, with its added dangers. The Nootka Sound crisis had brought home the risk of foreign war. Provincial discontent had come to a head at Marseilles. The financial situation was desperate. There was growing discontent with the Assembly, whose legislation met with opposition from vested interests all over the country. The Civil Constitution of the clergy, and the clerical oath, were soon to bring about schism and civil war. It was, no doubt, the consciousness of these dangers that led to a new *rapprochement* between Mirabeau and the Court early in December, when a coalition was talked of, to include Talon, Duquesnoy, and Barnave, but not Lafayette, and when Mirabeau came away from an interview with Montmorin convinced of his sincere attachment to the

royal cause, and determined to support him with all his power.

What does Mirabeau now propose? What is his new policy? The organization of a royal army, or at least of certain units under officers of proved Royalism—a beginning to be made with the Swiss and German regiments: the influencing of public opinion by a Royalist paper: the undermining of Lafayette's position, not only by inducing him to undertake the editorship of this paper (which will then be a failure), and to make proposals for a Constitution (which will be laughed out of the House), but also by encouraging conflicts between the Paris mob and the National Guard: the appointment of new Ministers, Mirabeau's nominees, or the supervision of the present Ministers by friends of the Court: and the embarrassment of the Assembly by all kinds of Parliamentary manœuvres, such as encouraging the clergy to refuse the oath, and the Assembly to enforce it, or bringing up needlessly controversial matters. The last part of this policy was embodied in the long forty-seventh Note—a *pacquet*, Mirabeau calls it, and it fills nearly 100 pages of print—which rehearses the obstacles to be overcome, the remedies to be applied, and the means to be adopted to this end. The obstacles are the King's weakness, the unpopularity of the Queen, the Paris mob, the National Guard, and the difficulty of counting upon any support in the Assembly. The remedy is to accept what is good in the Constitution, and to work for the revision of what is bad. The means to be employed are to ruin the credit of the present Assembly, and to carry a policy of revision in the body that takes its place. This will involve influencing the electorate; passing a measure to prevent the re-election of the present deputies, or at least to limit their re-election to their place of birth (this was directed against Jacobin 'carpet-baggers'); forming a revisionist party in the House by flattering or bribing prominent members for their support; forming a special organization to capture Paris opinion through its

deputies, journalists, and officials; and keeping up a correspondence with travelling agents in the provinces. There will, in short, be three *ateliers*, or offices, one dealing with the Assembly, one with Paris, and one with the provinces. Mirabeau's draft of the scheme even includes specimen reports on the state of public opinion, model questionnaires for the provincial agents, and a weekly time-table of meetings between Montmorin (the head of the organization) and his various subordinates.

Now, apart from the over-elaborateness of this plan, and the way in which some of its parts neutralize others, it includes certain features which, to say the least, can hardly be called either patriotic or statesmanlike. The schemes for tampering with the army, for discrediting the National Guard, for bringing the Assembly into contempt, and for buying support for the revisionist party, are such as a dishonest man might adopt, if he were sure that they would succeed, and succeed quickly; but no honest man would have anything to do with them. It can hardly be denied that, so far as he worked on these lines, Mirabeau, during the last six months of his life, was disloyal both to Parliament and to the country. And how, in the light of these proposals, can we think well of his statesmanship? The policy was adroit enough. It was based on an intimate knowledge of the situation. It took men and things for what they were. But it could not succeed quickly. And in the meantime it was playing upon the nerves of the Revolution. It was a policy which might win a point, but not the game; and it would discredit the winner. La Marck was not far wrong when he complained that it was the sort of plan which could only have been carried out by Cardinal de Retz.

In any case the scheme miscarried. The *Atelier de Police* under Talon and Sémonville bought up a journalist or two, and sent in a few reports of doubtful value. There is one bulletin from Duquesnoy, describing the tactics employed to form a revisionist party in the House. But Mercy

and La Marck from the first regarded the plan as unworkable. Mirabeau was not satisfied with his agents, and allowed himself to abuse Duquesnoy. And the King and Queen, while pretending to play their part—as, for instance, in the *démarche* to the Assembly on February 4—were already secretly planning a quite different move, and one contrary to all the advice that Mirabeau had given them—the flight to Varennes.

IV

Meanwhile Mirabeau's position in the House was growing more and more difficult. If he had been sure of the support of the King and the Ministers he might have taken a stronger line in the Assembly. If he had commanded the confidence of the Assembly he might have dictated a policy to the Court. But 'the ambiguous conduct of the Court—its weakness when it ought to make a stand, its stubbornness when it ought to yield, its inaction when it ought to act'—gave the Assembly a power that it would not otherwise have possessed, whilst it compromised at every turn Mirabeau's own attempts to save it. An incident which happened in November showed what he might expect. The Paris mob sacked the house of de Castries, while the National Guard looked on. This was just such an opportunity as Mirabeau had foreseen for discrediting Lafayette, and he made a point of defending the rioters in the House. But the only result of Lafayette's public failure was to drive him into the arms of the Court, where Mirabeau's defence of mob rule was misunderstood, and effectually alienated the King and Queen. 'He is quite out of favour at the Tuileries,' writes La Marck, 'where they are tired of his incurable mania for pursuing popularity'—this at the very moment when Montmorin was forming his coalition, and when Mirabeau was preparing to draw up his forty-seventh Note. In November, indeed,

as a result of the Castries affair, Mirabeau was popular with the crowd, and in January he was for the first time elected President of the Assembly. But it was becoming increasingly difficult to walk the political tight-rope.

As his political embarrassments grew, so did his bodily ailments. Already, a year ago, his sight had troubled him, and he had been speaking four or five times a day in the House with a bandage over his eyes. In October he had written that 'the Assembly, the Jacobins, and his eyes had pretty well killed him.' Now (January, 1791) his sight is worse, and he is undergoing treatment for it. Overwork and the unhealthy atmosphere of the Manège are breaking up a constitution weakened by years of exertion and excess. But he will go on working to the end.

This is how he struck Malouet, who had an interview with him two months before his death: 'The interview lasted from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Mirabeau was worried. He was already ill with the malady that caused his death. His eyes were so swollen and blood-shot that they seemed to start from his head—he was a horrible sight. But I never saw him more energetic, or more eloquent. "It is too late," he said to me, "to weigh objections. If you dislike what I propose, do better yourself; but do it quickly, for we have not long to live: whilst we are waiting, we shall die of consumption, or by violence. The more you insist upon the reality of the evils, the more urgent it becomes to remedy them. Do you question the means I propose? Can you name a single man who shares my will to act, and at the same time is better able to do so? All sensible people are on my side, and even part of the rabble. I am suspected, I know. I am accused of being in the pay of the Court. Little I care! No one will believe that I have sold my country's liberty, or that I am plotting to enslave it. 'You have seen me,' I shall say, 'fighting by your side against tyranny: it is against tyranny that I am fighting now'. But I have always maintained that it was my right and my duty to defend the authority of the laws, constitutional

monarchy, and the King's claim to be the champion of the people." "And don't forget," he added, "that I am the only one in this mob of patriots who can speak so without inconsistency. I have never shared their romantic ideas, their philosophy, or their useless crimes." I was electrified as he spoke (it might have been in the House) by his thundering voice, his vivid gestures, the richness and truth of his ideas. All my prejudices, all my doubts fell to the ground. I found myself sharing his emotion, praising his plans and his courage, and lauding his schemes to the sky.'

An account of Mirabeau's last illness has been left us by his friend and medical attendant, Dr. Cabanis. It is a little theatrical, as though both of them were conscious of the frequent inquiries that came from the Tuileries as well as from the Jacobin Club, and of the anxious crowds in the street outside. 'I was proud to consecrate my life to the people,' says Mirabeau, 'and I am glad to die among them'. Or again—'As soon as it was day'—it was that on which he died—'he had the windows opened, and said to me in a firm voice, "My friend, I shall die to-day. In such a case there is only one thing to do—to scent oneself, to crown oneself with flowers, and to surround oneself with music, so as to fall pleasantly into the sleep from which there is no awaking." ' This was to make it the apotheosis of a patriot, the first great deathbed of the New Paganism.

In the glow of this rather false sunset the people forgave Mirabeau's moral weaknesses, and forgot his political inconsistencies. He was followed to the grave (it was said) by over 100,000 people, and buried—the first to be so honoured—in the national Panthéon. Some fifty memorial services were held in the Paris churches, and only old-fashioned people were shocked when the invitation cards omitted the usual request to 'pray for the soul' of the dead man, and invited them to attend 'in his honour.' But we cannot be surprised that, when the story of Mirabeau's dealings with the Court became known, his body was disinterred, and its place taken by that of his enemy, Marat,

the one man unkind and clear-sighted enough to denounce him when he died.

V

'Mirabeau's career,' wrote one of Romilly's Paris friends, 'could not have come to an end at a moment more propitious for his own fame. Six months earlier his death would have been considered a happy event for the republic; and only two months ago it would have been looked upon with general indifference. But for some weeks past he had so entirely taken up the right side, and it was so strongly felt that he could not but accomplish whatever he wished, that all well-disposed people had placed in him their hopes for the restoration of order and peace, and looked upon him as the terror of the factious, and the prop of the Constitution.'

Mirabeau's strength as a statesman, as well as his weakness, lay in his political realism. 'In the last analysis,' he once said (and no one else, except Napoleon, could have said it) 'the people will judge the Revolution by one consideration, and one only: will it put more money into their pockets, or less? Will they be able to live more easily? Will they have more work, and better wages?' That was exactly true, and every year that the Revolution went on was to make its truth more obvious. But there is more in statesmanship than the calculation of material odds; and Mirabeau failed—or would have failed, had he lived longer—because his hard experience of life and his rhetorical rather than imaginative mind made him unfit to appeal to the enthusiasm and the ideals which were obscurely but genuinely present below the surface of party strife. He called Sieyès his master; but he never learnt Sieyès' favourite lessons—philosophical detachment and fastidious morality. Both men failed to guide the Revolution, but for opposite reasons: Sieyès because he pitched his aim too high; Mirabeau because he pitched it too low.

But he was not a mean or small-minded man; otherwise he could never have written these words, which we may take as the truest account of himself: 'Men and things *must obey* the man who, with strength of mind and determination of character, and not wasting his energies in vain show, resolves to carry his point. "I have commenced the campaign without resources, and upon unfavourable ground; but it is I who have commenced it!" And when we make up our mind to perish only by exhaustion—checked by no obstacle, determined to surmount every difficulty by which we may be opposed, and constantly again and again to return to the charge, to assail the same points—we are sure to triumph—or to die! I am so little certain of living the month after that in which I have conceived a good idea that I burn with impatience to see it realized, fearful lest it should perish with me, and lest Time should cut me down before I can bequeath it to mankind; for we ought no more to die than to live without glory. . . . My opinion respecting this world is that the smallest good as well as the greatest is compensated below its worth; and thus I shall pass my life in acquirement, physically and morally, knowing well that the game is not worth the candle. But I am tormented with my own activity; and when the candle, burnt at both ends, shall be exhausted—well, it will go out; but it will have given, for the smallness of its value, a bright light.'

LAFAYETTE

MARIE JOSEPH PAUL YVES ROCH GILBERT DE MOTIER, MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE

1757 September 6, born at Chavaniac, Auvergne.
1759 Father killed at Minden.
1770 Mother died.
1773 Married Marie Adrienne Françoise de Noailles.
1776 To America.
1777 Brandywine.
1778 Barren Hill; Monmouth; Rhode Island.
1779 To France and back.
1781 Defence of Virginia.
1781 Yorktown.
1784 Visit to America.
1787 Member of Notables.
1789 Deputy for Noblesse to States-General.
July 15, commanding National Guard.
1791 September, retirement.
December, command of Army of East.
1792 July, visit to Paris.
August, desertion and imprisonment.
1797 Released.
1799 Return to France.
1818 Deputy for Sarthe.
1824 Visit to America.
1825 Deputy for Meaux.
1830 July Revolution.
1834 May 20, died at Paris, æt. 76.

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Lafayette

from a statue by Badier

LAFAYETTE

I

WILLIAM HENRY, Duke of Gloucester, the favourite brother (it was said) of King George III, was dining with the Comte de Broglie and the officers of the French garrison at Metz. He had just received despatches from England, and readily talked about them: 'they related to American affairs, the recent Declaration of Independence, the insistence of the colonists, and the strong measures adopted by the ministry to crush the rebellion.'

Among those who heard him was a tall, thin, young man of nineteen, 'with a long nose, a retreating forehead, and reddish hair,' whose solemn manner and serious view of life were tolerated in the mess-room because of the blueness of his blood and the length of his purse. In a company generally frivolous on the surface and conservative below it this young aristocrat was seriously addicted to politics, and 'cherished liberty (as he once said) with the conviction of a geometer, the passion of a lover, and the enthusiasm of religion.' When he heard of the Declaration his imagination was fired with notions of knight-errantry, and he longed to strike a blow, not for the divine right of kings, but for the human duties of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This young Quixote had a name whose length rivalled his pedigree: it was Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert de Motier, Marquis de Lafayette.

He lost no time in preparing for his crusade, and nothing was allowed to stand in its way. He took as his motto '*Cur Non?*'—'Why Not?' A newly-married wife, with one child on her hands, and another expected; a crowd of pro-

testing relations; the objections of old de Broglie, who had seen the boy's father and uncle killed in the wars; the scruples of the Court, which might be compromised if so distinguished a protégé assisted a rebellion against a friendly power; arguments, expostulations, laments; royal couriers and *lettres de cachet*—all were swept aside by the young man of nineteen; as, at the age of eight, when he heard that a wolf had been seen in the village, he had swept aside the objections of his nurse, and 'made the hope of meeting the animal the object of all his walks.' Through a brother-officer of German birth, one Kalb, who had already visited America, Lafayette gets into touch with Silas Deane, the unofficial agent of the insurgents; a ship is bought at Bordeaux, and fitted out in a Spanish port; he crosses the frontier disguised as a post-boy, and puts to sea. All Paris was left wondering why 'a young courtier who had a pretty wife, two children, 5,000 crowns a year; in fact, everything which can make life agreeable,' should abandon it all for a quixotic adventure overseas. But they would have to understand soon: in ten years' time their very lives would depend upon it. For the impulse which took Lafayette to America in April, 1797, was the same which took the crowds, in July, 1789, to the storming of the Bastille.

After seven weeks' voyage Lafayette landed in South Carolina, and spent his first night on American soil in the house of Major Benjamin Huger, whose little boy, Francis, was to attempt, seventeen years later, to rescue him from a German prison. Then he set out on the 900 miles' journey that still separated him from Philadelphia, over roads so bad that the carriages broke down, and the travellers had to take to horseback. But Lafayette was charmed with everything. 'I shall now speak of the country,' he writes to his wife, 'and of its inhabitants. They are as attractive as my enthusiasm could picture them. Simplicity of manners, a desire to oblige, a love of country and of liberty, a sweet equality, prevail here universally. The

richest man and the poorest are on a level. . . . What enchants me here is that all the citizens are brethren.' Nor is he too preoccupied to notice that 'the American women are very pretty.'

So began an experience which not merely influenced, but fixed the whole of Lafayette's career. For this American adventure was a flame that melted his brittle but unbending nature just long enough for it to take the impress of a seal which nothing could afterwards efface. It was not so with most of the foreign officers whom Silas Deane had sent over. They were generally older men, and less impressionable; professional adventurers, to whom one country was no better than another; or experienced soldiers, who scoffed at the American Army. They could not often speak English: one of them, Baron Streuben, 'employed an interpreter to swear at his men.' They would not adapt themselves to American manners. They had been led to expect the best posts and the highest salaries, and, when they did not get them, returned home disillusioned with everything American. But Lafayette was rich enough to serve without pay, and modest enough to answer, when Washington apologized for the raggedness of his troops, that 'he was there to learn, not to teach.' Nor had he come to strike a back-handed blow at an old enemy of France, but to serve the cause of liberty wherever it could best be served. He spoke English; he admired—with an almost American enthusiasm—everything he saw in the New World; he behaved with so much tact and discretion towards his military colleagues that 'the very Mohawk chieftains would often bring their troubles to their father Kayewla'; and he said of his troops that 'only citizens could support the nakedness, the hunger, the labours, and the absolute lack of pay which constitute the conditions of our soldiers—the most enduring and the most patient, I believe, of any in the world.' In a series of engagements—at Brandywine, Gloucester, Barren Hill, Monmouth, and Newport—his bravery and leadership justified the rank

which had originally been given him 'on account of his zeal, his illustrious family, and connections'; and he was one of the heroes of Yorktown, which brought the war to an abrupt end. 'You know how little I am inclined to flattery,' wrote Gérard, the French Minister at Philadelphia, when Lafayette was returning to Europe in 1778; 'but I cannot resist saying that the prudent, courageous, and amiable conduct of the Marquis de Lafayette has made him the idol of the Congress, the army, and the people of America.' 'I do most devoutly wish,' added Washington, 'that we had not a single foreigner among us, except the Marquis de Lafayette.'

Washington meant what he said. From the moment of their first meeting at Philadelphia in 1777, when, 'although surrounded by officers and citizens, Washington was to be recognized at once by the majesty of his countenance and of his figure,' a close friendship had grown up between the two men. To the young aristocrat Washington embodied everything admirable in democratic America. The older man was disarmed and attracted by the other's enthusiasm and loyalty. Their friendship was tested by the sufferings of Valley Forge, and stood firm under the jealousies and intrigues which were more dangerous than British troops to the independence of the States. When quarrels broke out between French and American officers, when American Tories were found fighting on the English side, when the depreciation of the paper currency disorganized the commissariat, when an attempt was made to separate Lafayette from Washington by appointing him to the Army of the North, or when Conway's Cabal plotted to deprive Washington himself of his command—then these two stood together, and their friendship was the heart of the Franco-American alliance. Washington was not an effusive man, and he wrote in a style which was at one time popular for epitaphs, and hardly survives nowadays except in American testimonials; but there can be no doubt of his genuine regard for

the young Frenchman. 'The sentiments of affection and attachment,' he writes, 'which breathe so conspicuously in all your letters to me, are at once pleasing and honourable, and afford me abundant cause to rejoice at the happiness of my acquaintance with you. Your love of liberty, the sense you entertain of this valuable blessing, and your noble and disinterested exertions in the cause of it, added to the innate goodness of your heart, conspire to render you dear to me; and I think myself happy in being linked with you in the bonds of the strictest friendship.' Three years after this, Lafayette faced the American voyage a third time, mainly for the pleasure of seeing his friend again; and though he was publicly fêted (or 'fayetted,' as the phrase went) wherever he went, his happiest fortnight was spent at Washington's home at Mt. Vernon, sitting in the library, or walking about the grounds, and discussing with equal fervour the principles of liberty and of estate management. Washington's Liberalism became Lafayette's political creed. It was with 'the Washington formula' that he expected to solve every problem of public conduct. Washington's portrait was upon the seal which his life had taken at its one impressionable moment. The innate conservatism of his nature fixed it there irremovably.

II

Lafayette 'had left France an outlaw; he returned a hero.' Frenchmen in 1783 were a little inclined to think, like Americans a century and a half later, that they had 'won the war.' 'My great affair is settled,' he wrote proudly to Vergennes; 'America is sure of her independence; humanity has gained its cause; and liberty will never be without a refuge.' A vague Liberalism was at this time the fashion of the day; and Lafayette, who was still young enough to enjoy being lionized, went the round of the liberal Courts and salons of Europe, an unofficial ambas-

sador of liberty and the United States. He conferred with Malesherbes, Condorcet, and other friends of reform; he joined Rochefoucauld in a scheme for a model slave plantation in Cayenne; he championed the cause of the French Protestants; he spent a week at Potsdam, fascinated by 'Old Fritz's' table-talk; he helped Jefferson in commercial negotiations between France and the States, and was rewarded by the presentation of a gigantic cheese, 'as a feeble, but not the less sincere, testimonial of their affection and gratitude,' from the citizens of Nantucket; he is even said to have patronized the famous Mesmer, and to have cut the cord which released, for its first flight, Montgolfier's balloon. These activities were sometimes indiscreet. Pitt, aware of his correspondence with the anti-British party in Ireland and Holland, warned him ironically that he had better not visit London 'until the British monarchy had been disposed of'; and Jefferson suggested to his countrymen that an estate should be reserved for Lafayette in Virginia, in case Louis XVI, who had coupled pardon for his previous defiance with a warning against too public a parade of his opinions, should at any time send him into exile. But public opinion was every day making such a step less probable. The American spirit was creeping into a society which was, indeed, at heart utterly un-American. Lafayette had soon no need to adapt his opinions to French prejudices. Paris was assimilating itself to Philadelphia. France was already dreaming of its own Declaration of Rights.

In December, 1786, Lafayette gave up the chance of joining the Empress Catherine's famous expedition to the Crimea, in order to take his place among Calonne's Notables, and to plead for the civil rights of Protestants, the reform of the criminal law and prison *régime*, the abolition of trade restrictions, and a just system of taxation. But it appeared to him, as to many in whom the sentiment seemed less startling, that the only hope of securing these reforms lay in the summoning of the States-General. And

it was as deputy for the nobility of Auvergne that he appeared at Versailles in May, 1789—deeply suspected by many of his own Order, but affectionately regarded by the people as a champion of national liberty.

Lafayette's active career in Parliament was short and undistinguished. Though one of the most liberal of the Noblesse, he made no move to join the Commons before the royal invitation of June 27. Though he supported Mirabeau's demand for the withdrawal of the troops on July 8, and acted as President of the Assembly during the all-night sitting of July 13, his attitude towards the Revolution was better expressed in the abstract 'Declaration of the Rights of Man,' which he brought forward on July 11, and which served as the model for that finally adopted by the House. It was not till the events of July 12–14, culminating in the fall of the Bastille, showed the need of a military police to secure life and property in Paris, that a post was created for which Lafayette, by his reputation and experience, was ideally qualified. On July 15 he was nominated by the Electors, and on the 17th confirmed by the King as Commander of the National Guard.

For the next few months the business of organizing and disciplining this force occupied nearly all his time, and he was more often to be found at the Hôtel de Ville than in the Assembly. There were many difficulties. The enthusiasm shown by civilians to wear a uniform and carry a musket was itself an embarrassment. Tradesmen and artisans neglected their business for sentry-go and parade. 'Even the musicians of the Chapel Royal,' says de Bouillé, 'wore uniform at Mass, and a soprano sang a motet dressed as a captain of grenadiers, until the King prohibited this intrusion of militarism into public worship.' Again, though stiffened by a proportion of old soldiers, the Guard consisted mainly of men of some leisure and means, who did not readily submit to discipline. Nor was it possible for a patriot general, under a pacifist Assembly, and in face of a populace suspicious of middle-class dom-

ination, to enforce the ordinary rules of military service, or even of public order. His failure to protect Foulon and Berthier from a murderous crowd induced Lafayette to throw up his command within a week. But he was persuaded to resume it—and rightly; for no one else could have done as much as he did. Governeur Morris might enter in his diary, with a sneer, Lafayette's answer to his inquiry whether his troops would obey him, 'He says they will not mount guard when it rains, but he thinks they would readily follow him into action.' But Lafayette knew his own countrymen, and was right in thinking the first part of his answer less important than the second. For he looked further ahead than his civilian critics. To them the tricolour stood for the security of private property, and for a middle class *régime*. His mind's eye saw it flying, not on the Hôtel de Ville, but at the head of a citizen crusade for the liberation of Europe. 'I bring you a cockade,' he said to the Assembly, 'which will make the tour of the world, and an institution, at once civil and military, which will triumph over the old tactics of Europe, and which will reduce arbitrary governments to the alternative of being beaten if they do not imitate it, or overthrown if they dare to do so.' In the later days of the Revolution the National Guard was to be decentralized, popularized, and put to base uses; but as Lafayette made it and knew it, it was at once the recruiting-ground and the model of the Grand Army.

Lafayette's command of the National Guard made him, from 1789 to 1791, the most important figure in France next to the King; and it was impossible for anyone to control the political situation without his support. Moreover, after October, 1789, the King was a prisoner, the Tuileries was his prison, and his warder was Lafayette. The tragedy of these years was that, like Louis himself, Lafayette misread the political situation, had no policy of his own, and refused to ally himself with anyone who had.

He misunderstood France, because he misunderstood

America. It was for liberty that he had fought in the New World, and liberty became his solution for all the troubles of the Old. But he thought of liberty like the Colbertists thought of wealth—as a commodity, which could be captured and stored. He failed to realize all that lay behind the Declaration of Independence—the English Parliamentary tradition, the character of the Puritan Fathers, the hard-won competence of colonists in a new land, and the strong qualities of a self-educated people, without which liberty would have been an empty word. Missing these facts in America, he failed to notice their absence in France, or to realize how unfit the Assembly and people were for liberty and self-government. It seemed to him enough that France should have the King, the Constitution, and the National Guard—the King as the head of the Government, the Constitution as a charter of liberty, and the Guard, under his own hand, as the warder both of the King and the Constitution. On one occasion he was asked whether his men could be relied on to enforce the decrees about religion. 'I replied,' he says, 'that the National Guard was an excellent instrument that would play every tune they chose, provide they did not attempt changing its key, which was the Declaration of Rights.' Such an attitude might be magnificent, but it was not statesmanlike.

It may be wondered why Lafayette was not a republican. On his return from America he had written to a friend, 'I have always thought a king was a useless creature, if nothing worse; and he cuts a poorer figure here every day.' He put up in his room a copy of the Declaration of Rights, and kept an empty space for a French declaration to balance it. He attended reviews in his American uniform, and explained with some complacency to Louis XVI that the device he wore on his sword-belt represented a tree of liberty growing out of a crown and a broken sceptre. But he soon gave up his American uniform and his American republicanism. Too French to

understand American liberty, he was also too French to imagine his country with any but a monarchical government. He fancied himself, no doubt, in the rôle of a French Washington; but, like Washington himself, and other thoughtful Americans, he did not suppose that this need involve the destruction of the French monarchy. 'To be Washington under Louis XVI—that is the dream which is evidenced by his every act, and word, and authentic writing.' The Revolution was to come through the King, 'who would voluntarily submit himself—as, according to Mably's historical theories, Charlemagne had done—to the wishes of the sovereign people.' 'If the King refuses the Constitution,' Lafayette was in the habit of saying, 'I shall fight him; if he accepts it, I shall defend him.' It was a simple rule of conduct—too simple. And it can easily be imagined that, as Louis's attitude towards the Constitution became more and more dubious, and his protestations of loyalty harder to credit, Lafayette's position became very difficult. Yet he could only deplore the failure of the monarchy: he had no policy to remedy it. 'I see with great regret,' he writes in October, 1790, 'that royalty is daily ruining its own cause, and that between the C. d'Artois and the D. d'Orleans the King may be left entirely alone. The public interest and the King must be saved, whether he will or not. I will tell them (the King and Queen) this evening all the danger to which they expose themselves; if they are not honestly at the head of the Revolution, and will not unreservedly give themselves up to it, I cannot answer for anything. Royalty can only preserve itself by being in unison with the Revolution: otherwise it must be destroyed, and I will be the first to contribute to its destruction. The King is king neither of the aristocrats nor of the factions; he is king of the people and of the Revolution; otherwise he may be dethroned either by the former or by the latter.' In November, Lafayette interviews the Queen—'a long, and, I think, useless conversation'—urging an alliance with the 'popular monarchical party':

but he thinks—perhaps not quite unfairly—that the Queen 'was more intent upon appearing to advantage in the midst of the peril, than in averting it.' 'As for my relations with the King,' he wrote in March, 1793, 'he always gave me his esteem, but never his confidence. My supervision inconvenienced him, and I was hated by the people round him: but I tried to inspire him with feelings and proceedings useful to the Revolution, and to guarantee his life and tranquillity.' But it was a hopeless task. The King's conscience or the Queen's pride blocked every honest concession to the Revolution. Both were planning to betray their new friends, as their old friends had betrayed them, by escaping from the country.

But though he misunderstood his country, and could give no policy to his King, might not Lafayette have co-operated with those who realized the situation and had a policy for their common salvation? Mirabeau tried to win his support. Why was it refused? Lafayette was proud of his empty isolation; and unwilling to share out his power; he had a military man's suspicion of politicians, and a Puritanical distaste for Mirabeau's manners; but in the main he was still, as he had been ten years before, a man of one idea, a fanatical champion of liberty, which he now identified with the King and the Constitution, and which he feared (as only fanatics can fear) might, if he compromised his principles by a hair's breadth, fail him altogether. There was not only the possibility of an alliance with Mirabeau. Governeur Morris's diary is full of allusions to negotiations for a ministry of patriots, which might dictate a policy to the King. On October 11, 1789, Morris urges that Lafayette himself 'cannot possibly act both as minister and soldier—still less as minister of every department; that he must have coadjutors in whom he can confide; that as to the objections he has made on the score of morals in some (the reference is no doubt to Mirabeau), he must consider that men do not go into administration as the

direct road to Heaven, that they are prompted by ambition and avarice, and therefore that the only way to secure the most virtuous is by making it their interest to act rightly'; and they proceed to discuss the names of possible ministers—Malesherbes and Rochefoucauld as well as Mirabeau. But though Lafayette listened, he did not believe. At their next conversation 'he says that in a fortnight the Assembly will be obliged to give him authority which he has hitherto declined. He shows clearly in his countenance (says Morris) that it is the wish of his heart. I ask him what authority. He says a kind of dictatorship, such as generalissimo—he does not exactly know what will be the title. . . . Here is a vaulting ambition (is Morris's comment) which o'erleaps itself. This man's mind is so elated by power, already too great for the measure of his abilities, that he looks into the clouds, and grasps at the Supreme.' This judgment was largely mistaken. There was something in Lafayette too simple for Morris's cynical philosophy. It was not ambition, but love of fame; not self-interest, but devotion to a cause, that turned his thoughts towards a dictatorship. It was, as it had always been with him, the Washington formula.

But an error due to good motives may be as disastrous as one due to bad: and Lafayette's refusal to share his power, or to co-operate with the politicians, aimed a fatal blow at that very unity of King and Constitution for which he supposed himself to stand. It had another consequence equally disastrous. As Lafayette turned away from the politicians, and became more and more the guardian of the crown, he sacrificed the respect of the people, who were gradually losing their loyalty to the throne. On October 6, 1789, after saving the royal family from the crowd, he had also, by a brave and chivalrous gesture, saved its reputation, and his own. But in the troublesome affair of the Nancy Mutiny, in July, 1790, he incurred the wrath of the patriots by upholding military discipline in the person of his Royalist relation, the Marquis de Bouillé. The Cas-

tries riot and the attack on Vincennes the same year, and the affair of the King's attempted journey to St. Cloud in April, 1791, made him increasingly unpopular. His reputation was seriously compromised by the flight to Varennes (June, 1791), when he was unfairly supposed to have been privy to the royal plot. It was finally lost when on July 17, 1791, he joined with Bailly in dispersing the republican demonstration in the Champ de Mars, and when, in the name of the King and the Constitution, the National Guard fired on the Paris crowd. There was not much regret felt on either side when, with the dissolution of the Assembly in September, 1791, and the abolition of the single command of the National Guard, Lafayette retired to his country estate at Chavaniac.

Two years before he had told Morris, in a moment of discouragement, that 'he had had the utmost power his heart could wish, and had grown tired of it,' and that 'he wished therefore as soon as possible to return to private life.' Now he had his wish. If he needed consolation, he found it in the example of Washington's retirement to Mt. Vernon, and in the story of Cincinnatus, to whose Order they both belonged—the Roman patriot who, when he had saved his country, gladly returned to his farm and to his plough. Lafayette was always happy—it was one of his pleasantest traits—in the country, and among humble folk. 'I enjoy,' he now wrote, 'with the rapture of a lover of liberty and equality this complete change (the Revolution) which has placed all citizens on the same footing, and which respects only legal authorities. I cannot tell you with what delight I bow before the village mayor. One must be something of an enthusiast to enjoy all this as I do . . . I take as much pleasure, and perhaps pride, in absolute rest as I have done for the last fifteen years in action—action which has always been directed to one end, and, now that it is crowned with success, leaves me nothing but the part of a country labourer.'

III

If Lafayette still had some hankerings after a political career, they were discouraged in the following November by his defeat at the hands of Pétion in a contest for the mayorality of Paris. It was not till the end of the year that he came out of his retirement to organize, at the request of Narbonne, now Minister of War, the eastern army, and to bear the burden of the foreign invasion that every week was bringing nearer the frontier. This, at any rate, was a task for which Lafayette was excellently fitted, and which in happier times he would have acquitted with complete success. But during the early months of 1792 he was hampered by all kinds of difficulties—by the inexperience and undiscipline of the new rank and file, recruited principally from the National Guard, and by the difficulty of amalgamating them with the relics of the old army; by the lack of competent commanders, owing to the emigration of so many officers of the royal army, and by the friction that arose if commissions were given to N.C.O.'s of the old regiments, or 'temporary gentlemen' of the new; by the lack of funds and equipment due to inexperience, disorganization, and the depreciation of the paper currency; and, above all, by the discord and distrust that prevented any proper co-operation between the civilian government at the capital and the military command in the field. Lafayette found his relations with the Brissotin Government, which came into power in the spring of 1792, particularly difficult. They were planning war: he was hoping for peace. They were nominally defending the Constitution, but really working for a republic: his slow mind was just beginning to wonder whether the Constitution might not be, after all, unworkable. 'He asks me,' writes Morris, on June 29, 1792, 'what I mean by a good constitution; whether it is an aristocratic one. I tell him yes, and that I presume he has lived long enough in the present style to

see that a popular government is good for nothing in France. He says he wishes the American Constitution, but a hereditary executive. I tell him that in such a case the monarch will be too strong, and must be checked by a hereditary senate. He says it goes hard with him to give up that point.' Now the date of this conversation was June 29, 1792, midway between the first and second attacks on the Tuileries, and at a time when it would have been difficult to find, in the whole of Paris, an honest supporter of the King or of the Constitution. Lafayette was still loyal to both. On June 16 he had published a letter of protest against the proceedings of the Jacobin Club:—'this sect,' he had been bold enough to say, 'organized like a distinct empire, in its metropolis and affiliated societies, blindly guided by some ambitious chiefs, forms a separate corporation in the midst of the French people, whose power it usurps, by governing its representatives and proxies.' On the 27th, after the first attack on the Tuileries, he had himself come to Paris, at risk of his life, to demand the punishment of the agitators of June 20, to restore order, reassure the army, and 'destroy a sect which invades the rights of the national sovereignty, and tyrannizes over the citizens.' It was during this short visit that the conversation with Morris must have taken place. It shows how far Lafayette had lost touch with the situation, that not only was his constitutionalism quite out of fashion at Paris, but also his royalism at court. Both Malouet and de Moleville say that Lafayette suggested plans for the escape of the royal family in the early summer of 1792: both add that they were foiled by the Queen's refusal to be helped by him. 'The last time I saw him,' wrote Lafayette afterwards, referring to an interview during his visit to Paris on June 28–29, 'the King told me in the presence of the Queen and his family that the Constitution was his safety, and that he was the only person who observed it.' In a pedantic sense this was true: Louis in June, 1792, was at last finding a use for the constitutional veto that he had formerly de-

spised. But he was using it to defy the will of the people, and would soon find that a constitutional king had no place in an increasingly republican country. As for the war, 'the hopes of the King were, in fact, bound up with the invasion which Lafayette was planning to resist.' The only effect of his attempt to help the royal family was to involve himself in their ruin. A week later his conduct was debated in the House. Dr. Moore, who was present, says that, though the majority of the members took his part, the public in the galleries raised 'violent exclamations and murmurs' against him.

When August 10 came, Lafayette could see in it nothing but disaster—'the King's life only saved by illegal suspension; the National Guard disarmed; the oldest and most faithful friends of liberty . . . betrayed to the murderers; the Constitution become a sign of proscription; the Press in chains; opinions punished by death; letters opened and falsified; jurymen replaced by executioners, with the Minister of Justice at their head; the administrative and municipal bodies of Paris dissolved, and remodelled by a riot; and the National Assembly forced, with a dagger at its throat, to sanction these outrages—in a word, natural, civil, religious, and political liberty stifled in blood.' 'What was a man to think,' he asks, 'what was a man to do, who was the first in Europe to proclaim, as the aim of his every breath and thought, the Declaration of Rights?—who had pronounced at the altar of Federation, and in the name of all Frenchmen, the civic oath?—and who at that time regarded the Constitution, in spite of all its faults, as the best rallying-point against our enemies? I was the last and almost the only one to resist: but if intrigue misled many citizens, they were nearly all frozen with fear. I was abandoned, accused, proscribed. My defence might have been bloody, but it would have been useless, and the enemy was in a position to profit by it. I wanted to attack, to be killed; but seeing no military advantage in it I stayed where I was. I wanted to go and die at Paris; but I feared that

such an example of popular ingratitude (as my murder would be) might discourage future friends of liberty. So I left the country.' A tame conclusion; but the only possible one for a man who so steadfastly refused to move with the times.

Lafayette might have hoped that, as the sole remaining champion of the Bourbons, he would be well received by the rulers of Prussia and Austria. But he was cruelly disillusioned. To them he was still the liberator of America, the revolutionist of 1789, and the jailer of the Tuileries. He had escaped from spiritual imprisonment in Paris, only to find himself immured, for five years, in the dungeons of Wesel, Spandau, Magdeburg, and Olmütz. If he had not still been a young man (he was only thirty-three) and of a strong constitution he might never have survived treatment compared to which the lot of many of the prisoners of the Terror was luxury. 'Imagine,' he writes from Magdeburg, 'an opening made under the rampart of a citadel, and surrounded by a high and strong palisade. Here, unlocking four doors successively, each of which is armed with chains, padlocks, and iron bars, you come with great trouble and noise to my cell, which is three paces wide and five and a half long. The wall on the side of the ditch is mouldy, and the opposite one lets in daylight, though no sunlight, through a small grated window. I have some books, from which the blank pages are torn out, but no news, no communication, no ink, pens, paper, or pencil. It is by a miracle that I possess this sheet of paper, and am writing to you with soot and a tooth-pick. My health is failing every day.' His imprisonment roused little sympathy, except in America, where the *Columbian Centinal* declared that it was unfortunate for him that the castle of Spandau was not situated as near to Philadelphia as the Bastille to Paris, for 'the free-born sons of Columbia would glory in effecting the liberation of their hero'; whilst one William Bradford achieved undeserved fame by a poem called *The Lament of Washington*, written

on seeing Lafayette's old friend weep at the mention of Olmütz.

> As beside his cheerful fire,
> Midst his happy family,
> Sat a venerable sire,
> Tears were starting to his eye,
> Selfish blessings were forgot,
> While he thought on Fayette's lot,
> Once so happy in our plains,
> Now in poverty and chains.

When he was ultimately released, in 1797, it was not due to any humanity of the Austrian Government, or to any special effort on the part of his friends (though his American admirer, Francis Huger made a gallant attempt to contrive his escape), but to the victory of the Republican Army in Italy, and to the guns and diplomacy of citizen-general Bonaparte.

IV

Lafayette, at the time of his release, was only forty, and still had nearly that number of years to live. But the second half of his life is of little importance for his revolutionary career, except where it throws light on his unchanging character, and on his unfaltering allegiance to the creed of 1789. Thus he refused to help Napoleon to save the Republic in 1799, as he had refused to help Mirabeau, ten years before, to save the monarchy; and he voted against the Life Consulship. He lived in rustic retirement on his Lagrange estate, surrounded by reminders of the past, which was always more real to him than the present—a faded flag of the National Guard; portraits of Bailly and Rochefoucauld; a marble bust of Washington, with his lorgnettes, his parasol, and a ring enclosing samples of his own and of his wife's hair; similar relics of Benjamin Franklin and Jeremy Bentham; and the sword of honour that he received for his services in the American War. But

life at Lagrange was not all spent in sentimental reminiscences. Lafayette had also to face the serious business of managing the estate, and making sufficient profits out of farming to pay off his many creditors. One of these, his old critic Governeur Morris, harboured a grievance all his life, because the General proposed to repay a loan of 100,000 livres in the exchange-value of assignats at the time of the original transaction—viz., little more than half their face value. Whether Lafayette was mean or Morris grasping, it is for economists rather than historians to decide: but his latest biographer asserts that Lafayette, in fact, divided among his various creditors all that he could spare.

In 1824, Lafayette varied his retirement by a year's visit to America. His arrival, heralded by an adulatory article in the *North American Review*, caused an immense sensation, and even held up the Presidential campaign of that year. He travelled all over the States, and was greeted, wherever he went, with wild enthusiasm. 'The sick were carried out on mattresses, and wrung his hand, and thanked God. Babies were named after him—one bore through life the name Welcome Lafayette. Old soldiers stretched out hands . . . in efforts to detain him and fight their battles o'er. Small boys drew 'Lafayette fish' out of brooks on summer days. . . Little girls, very much washed and curled, presented him with useless bouquets, and lisped artless odes of welcome.' Triumphal arches were put up with the inscription, 'France gave him birth, but America gave him Immortality.' Lafayette went through it all cheerfully and tactfully, and only drew the line at laurel-wreathes, which disarranged the new chestnut wig that he now wore to conceal hisgreying hair. The festivities culminated in the laying of a corner-stone at Bunker's Hill, with a speech by Daniel Webster, and a blessing by the chaplain who had led prayer before the battle. After the ceremony Lafayette sat among the forty grey-haired survivors of the great day, and thought, perhaps, of a similar scene of thanksgiving in which he had taken part—

the Fête of Federation on the Champ de Mars—thirty-five years before.

Ten years later, in 1835, a certain Dr. Jules Cloquet, who had been Lafayette's medical attendant, wrote a series of letters to an American correspondent, which were published under the title of *Recollections of the Life of General Lafayette*. To this witness we owe not only the details of the daily life at Lagrange, but also a portrait of the great man, feature by feature, as he appeared in his later years, and as he was generally known to the world at large. 'He was tall and well-proportioned,' we are told, 'and decidedly inclined to embonpoint, though not to obesity. His head was large; his face oval and regular; his forehead lofty and open (the good doctor forgets to say that it was receding); his eyes, which were full of goodness and meaning, were large and prominent, of a greyish blue, and surmounted with light and well-arched, but not bushy, eyebrows. His nose was aquiline; his mouth, which was habitually embellished with a natural smile, was seldom opened except to utter kind and gracious expressions. His complexion was clear; his cheeks were slightly coloured, and at the age of seventy-one not a single wrinkle furrowed his countenance, the ordinary expression of which was that of candour and frankness.' The doctor adds that Lafayette was a little deaf, and suffered occasionally from gout, but that he had good sight and keen perceptions; that he was lame in one leg since a fall in 1803; and that he always dined off a little fish, and the wing of a fowl, and drank nothing but water.

V

This temperate and rather tedious old gentleman reappeared for the last time in 1830, to lead the 'July Revolution' against the only other man in France who had not changed his mind since 1789; and then, having deposed a Bourbon, put an Orléans in his place—never truly happy

unless supporting a king and a Constitution. 'I have always considered Lafayette,' said Wellington ten years later, 'as a striking instance of how seldom men in politics profit by experience. After all that he had said and done in 1789, and seeing the results, he was beginning to play exactly the same part after 1830; and if Louis Philippe had not been a very different man from Louis XVI, and had not had the firmness first to check and then to dismiss him, he would a second time have overturned the Government by just the same proceedings.' Lafayette's failures were indeed due to the same quality as his successes. 'It was the same unswerving adherence to principle, and the same insufficient control of circumstance, that shaped the whole of his political course.'

Lagrange was enriched, during Lafayette's final retirement, by a new batch of mementoes—two cannon mounted on cartwheels that had been used in the July Revolution; a flag captured by the people from the Swiss Guard; and a white cockatoo presented by Benjamin Constant. And at Lagrange, in May, 1834, in a room whose walls were hung with the historical relics of Independence, and with pictorial records of his own career, Lafayette ended a life, fifty-seven out of whose seventy-seven years had been spent fighting for the cause of freedom. He was buried beside his wife, whose days had been shortened by sharing his imprisonment; in a cemetery first used for victims of the Terror; and in soil brought from an Ameribattlefield. It was a military funeral; and, from fear of political demonstrations, the streets were crammed with troops. 'The French Army surrounded his coffin as relentlessly as the Austrian Army had held him a prisoner at Olmütz.' A Liberal cartoon represented Louis Philippe rubbing his hands and saying, 'Lafayette, you're caught, old man!'

But history has been fairer to his fame. He is better remembered as the friend of Washington than as the supporter of Louis Philippe; and less honoured in France,

where he always seemed something of a foreigner, than in the country which he adopted as his spiritual fatherland.

Indeed, if we are looking for a worthy appreciation of his character, we shall find none better than that of the American writer who welcomed him to the States in 1824. 'We are permitted to see,' he wrote, 'one who, by the mere force of principle, by plain and resolved integrity, has passed with perfect consistency through more remarkable extremes of fortune than any man now alive, or perhaps any man on record. We are permitted to see a man who has professed, amidst glory and suffering, in triumph and disgrace, the same principles of political freedom on both sides of the Atlantic; who has maintained the same tone, the same air, the same open confidence amidst the ruins of the Bastille, in the Champ de Mars, under the despotism of Bonaparte, and in the dungeons of Olmütz.'

'Since Psalms have become fashionable again,' Lafayette wrote to a friend in 1800, 'I have a right to say for myself the *Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper*'—'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.' It was his doxology; it might well be his epitaph.

But something lacks for a complete judgment; and it shall be said in the words of an able young Balliol man, whose figure, in his later days, was one of the curiosities of Oxford. 'Lafayette's services as a citizen,' wrote Arthur Higgs, 'suffered from his perfections as a character. . . . He never saved his country, and approaches at times the imputation of having lost it, but always from aversion to the dishonesty and the violence which would have marred the smoothness of his moral grace. . . . And so he passed his whole career showing personal excellence where he should have shown political power, a hero of romance tossing upon the waves of civil confusion, a Puritan dreamer baffled by the hard alternatives of life, finding at every turn he had too close a conscience to become a statesman. The principles of 1789 made up the sum of his political creed, and his political plans would never go beyond the

rule of liberty and *laissez-faire*. . . . His easiness of nature prevented him from coping with the problems of his time; and thus he flitted quietly where others fell, a hero who preserved his life and enjoyed his fame. . . . He cannot claim the enthusiasm due to greater spirits, who have had further insight, and felt deeper passion, have flung themselves in more complete self-sacrifice against the bars of Fate. . . . In the second roll of faithful servants and pure characters he will hold unchallenged the highest place.'

BRISSOT

JACQUES PIERRE BRISSOT

1754 January, born at Chartres.

1781 *Théorie des lois criminelles.*

1782 *Bibliothèque philosophique du legislateur.*
First visit to London.
Journal du Lycée de Londres.
Second visit to London.
Société des Amis des Noirs.

1788 Visit to U.S.A.

1789 *Patriote français.*

1791 *Nouveau voyage dans les États-Unis.*
Deputy to Legislative Assembly.

1792 Deputy to Convention.

1793 October 31, executed, æt. 39.

AUTHORITIES:

Brissot's *Mémoires*, ed. Perroud (2 vols.).
Brissot's *Correspondance et Papiers*, ed. Perroud (1912).

J. P. BRISSOT,

from a painting by F. Bonneville

BRISSOT

I

THE life of Brissot, though it equally falls within the revolutionary period, seems to belong to a different world from those of Mirabeau and Sieyès. The King's flight to Varennes in June, 1791, altered the whole aspect of the Revolution. The artificial unity and calm which the shock of it created lasted barely a fortnight. The restoration of the crown, carried through by a party only anxious to work the strings of the royal puppet, could not hide the fact that France had been for several weeks without a King, and might now pass at any moment—though the word was anathema—into a Republic. Into the void left by the King's nullity, party spirit poured like a Thames flood. Differences of opinion which Mirabeau had dominated, and from which Sieyès stood aloof; party quarrels which had been forgotten in the common attack on the Court; personal enmities aggravated by two years' neighbourhood in a noisy and crowded Assembly; provincial grievances, theological hatred, and the disorderly demands of the Paris mob—these were the everyday background of the politics of 1791–3; they were food and drink to Brissot and his opponents. It would be easy to turn away in distaste from this period of the Revolution, with its fatal feuds and disastrous war, with its proscriptions and its massacres, to find more to admire in the crude enthusiasms of 1789, or even in the cruel austerity of the Terror. But a historian's business is to understand; and he cannot explain either why the Revolution of 1789 failed to reach a happy conclusion, nor how the Terror saved the Revolution of 1792 from dissolution, except by studying the party struggle that ended in the Revolution of 1793. During the

greater part of the two years from June, 1791, to June, 1793, the dominant party in politics was that first called the Brissotins, and afterwards the Gironde. Brissot's character is typical of the party, and his career summarizes the period.

Jacques Pierre Brissot, the son of a restaurant proprietor at Chartres, was born thirty-five years before the outbreak of the Revolution. Whilst Sieyès was moulded by the seminary, and Mirabeau by the army, Brissot, being the thirteenth in a family of seventeen children, had from an early age to set about earning his own living. To distinguish himself from the rest of the family, and perhaps with a touch of snobbery, he adopted the name of a neighbouring village, and called himself Brissot de Warville. Intended for the Bar, he soon came to hate what he called the 'disgusting novitiate' of a solicitor's office; but it left him leisure to read, and to qualify for the more attractive career of a journalist. He had been a passionate reader almost from his cradle, had won all the prizes at school, and, with a memory that enabled him—so his friend Pétion asserts—to quote anything he had once read, soon learnt English and Italian, besides making a start on Greek, Spanish, and German; while his Sundays were spent in the study of Locke, Montesquieu, and Montaigne. In one of his letters to Madame Roland, a fellow-romantic, he describes the vivid impressions which his studies produced on him—how, when he read a book about China, he imagined himself a Tartar general scouring the Asian plains at the head of half a million men—though even at that age he 'hated bloodshed, and liked to make people happy'; or how, devouring Anson's *Voyage*, he imagined himself 'constructing log-huts in the happy isles of Juan Fernandez and Tinian.' This habit of seeing himself in imaginary situations, striking heroic attitudes, and making noble speeches so grew upon Brissot that he ended by being almost unable to behave naturally and be his unaffected self. He never outgrew a weakness for construct-

ing romantic log-huts in happy isles. He was for ever founding societies, writing pamphlets, or editing journals in the interest of more or less quixotic causes. And there runs all through his life a strain or moral priggishness and self-conceit which makes his undeniable virtues undeniably unattractive.

This was not so unusual then as it would be now, or so deserving of blame. In Brissot's circle, which knew nothing of a Public School system, it was thought natural that young people should have no 'repressions,' and should 'express their personalities' with a Rousseauist lack of reserve. Allowance, too, must be made for something which, it has been said, 'no Anglo-Saxon can understand —the fluency in self-revelation which centuries of the confessional have given to the Latin races.' Given this education, journalism was probably the worst profession that Brissot could have embraced. It dissipated his interests, which were already too wide; indulged his feelings, which were already too facile; and made it a virtue instead of a vice to use ten words where five would have been enough. He soon plunged into authorship. Before he was thirty he had published attacks upon the Académies and Inns of Court, an essay on contemporary literature, a humorous work, a series of letters on St. Paul's Epistles, a book on India, several treatises on criminal law, and the prospectus of a philosophical work entitled *Universal Pyrrhonism*. Not content with writing for the *Mercure*, the *Courrier de l'Europe*, and other papers, he made London his headquarters (staying in 'the salubrious suburb of Brompton') for an international society and journal intended to bring together the learned men of all Europe; but the *Lycée de Londres*, like too many of Brissot's ventures, was a failure. Brissot's correspondence during these years includes letters to D'Alembert, Voltaire, and Jeremy Bentham, and shows that his mind was running strongly on the scandals of the French judicial system; it must have added point to his feelings to find himself, on his return from England

in 1784, charged with another man's libels, and imprisoned for two months in the Bastille.

For Brissot was 'a man born to be duped, who believed in the good faith of his friends with a childlike simplicity, cared nothing for his own interests, and wrote books with no thought but that of expressing his ideas, speaking the truth, and being of use to the world'; and his papers include more than one letter from his wife, complaining of the difficult circumstances in which this unworldliness placed his family. 'My husband is getting plenty of glory,' she writes to her sister, 'but the money doesn't come our way. His patriotism, and the way he gives up his life to useful work—no one realizes as I do how much they cost.'

From 1784, then, to 1788, he was in Paris, living perforce in the simplest possible way, and becoming more and more involved in all the advanced movements of the day. Besides producing various learned books, he supplied the virtuous Roland with information for his *Dictionary of Manufactures*, on the subjects of hides, oil, soap, and dyes, dealing with each of these 'from the point of view of a naturalist, an artist, an agriculturalist, a tradesman, an economist, and a philosopher.' He was secretary of the Gallo-American Society, which encouraged the exchange of all kinds of benefits between the two countries, from trees and tobacco to potatoes and wallpaper. He was founder and first secretary of a society, called 'Amis des Noirs,' for protecting the interests of the negro population of the West Indies. And there appears among his papers, written in English which throws some doubts upon his mastery of our language, the prospectus of a society 'for promoting the emigration from Europe in the United States.'

After this we are not surprised to find Brissot, in June, 1788, sailing from Havre-de-grâce, with a questionnaire on American manners in his pocket, to join a brother-in-law in Pennsylvania, and to carry through an operation in connexion with the war debt of the United States. But he had

only been there six months when the news of the Revolution hurried him back to Paris—Paris which, once a purgatory, had now become a paradise for patriots and pamphleteers.

II

Brissot had already served an apprenticeship in revolution. After his release from the Bastille in 1784, which he owed to the fact that his wife had been a governess in the Orléans family, he had accepted a post under Ducrest, the Duke's Chancellor; and in August, 1787, he had seen and criticized the programme of an Orléanist revolution. Writing with the knowledge that he had behind him the richest prince in France, the Chancellor proposes to stabilize the budget without imposing any new taxation: he will wave a magic wand (evidently of gold), and restore the King and Queen, in whose interest the scheme is propounded, to happiness and security. Brissot's later account of the matter, at a time when it was dangerous to have had any dealings with Orléans, was that he had seen through the disingenuity of this plan, and that it was disgust which drove him to America. But at the time—for we have his answer to Ducrest—he approved of Orléans in the rôle of de Retz, as the leader of a new Fronde—its rallying cry to be 'a Constitution for France,' its immediate aim popular control of taxation, and its method the purchase of political support by the use of the Duke's money-bags. With this skeleton in his cupboard, and with the reputation of a tireless and rather tiresome popularizer of other men's ideas, Brissot in the two years 1789-90 made a position for himself outside the House second only to that of Robespierre within it. Not a member of the Assembly, he was, nevertheless, co-opted on to the Constitutional Committee; and here, as well as in the Municipal Assembly of Paris, and among his own 'Amis des Noirs,' he met most of the political leaders of the day. Always more of a writer

than a speaker, he relied upon his journal, the *Patriote*, founded in July, 1789, to express his policy, and won such a reputation as a philanthropist, a political theorist, and an authority on international affairs, that his election to the Legislative Assembly in 1791 seemed to his French friends a well-merited reward for his patriotic services, and to his English enemies the best way of extinguishing another Wilkes.

How did Brissot see himself at the opening of his political career? We know, because he has left us his portrait, painted in the fashion of the times, under an assumed name. 'Phédor,' he says in his *Mémoires*, 'is not very tall: at first glance there is nothing uncommon about him; but one can see in his eyes and face, particularly when he speaks, the active temper of his soul. Phédor could have been an orator if he had practised early enough the art of rhetoric. His resonant voice and keen glance held promise of success. But he reads his speeches; and the best speech, when read, makes far less impression than one improvised, or even recited from memory. Besides, he does not like speaking, and even has a reputation for shyness. He has a passion for publication, even when he has to bear the cost. . . . He sacrifices his family to the cause of humanity. He is too credulous, too confiding. He is a stranger to revenge, as he is to self-interest. To judge from some of his writings, he might be compounded of bile and vengeance, whilst, in fact, he is too weak to hate anyone. He has friends, but not always of the heart-to-heart kind. He is as pleasant and easy-going in society and verbal argument as he is difficult and cantankerous in controversy. Phédor is one of those men who are at their best alone, and who are less useful to the world when they live in it than when they dwell in solitude.' Add to this that Brissot attached importance to dressing for the part—that he was one of the first who at this time wore their hair in Quaker fashion, unpowdered, just as later he was the first to popularize the *bonnet rouge*, along with the titles

citoyen and *sansculotte*—and we have a complete portrait of the patriot of 1791.

What, now, was the political situation when Brissot took his seat in the Legislative Assembly? Since Mirabeau's death in April three events had altered the whole outlook of the Revolution—the flight to Varennes, the Massacre of the Champ de Mars, and the King's acceptance of the Constitution.

We have seen Mirabeau, in October, 1789, advising the King to move from Paris to Rouen, and to appeal from the Assembly to the people. That plan might have involved civil war. Mirabeau was prepared to face the risk: but the King was not: so the plan fell through. But what Louis refused to do, under advice, in 1789, for fear of war at home, he did of his own accord, in 1791, with the practical certainty that it would be followed by a foreign invasion. The direction of his flight towards Metz and the German frontier could bear no other construction. The King's contention that he never intended to leave the country was as unconvincing as the 'official version' of the incident—that he had been kidnapped by a foreign power. When he was brought back as a prisoner to the Tuileries on June 26, and saw through his carriage windows the sullen, silent crowd, and not a hat raised as he passed, he must have known that his royalty, if not his reign, was over. The mob signalized the change by defacing every royal emblem in the city. The politicians started plotting for the control of the poor remnants of royal prestige. The journalists began to talk of a republic. And though the course of events seemed to turn back once or twice afterwards, there was no real break in the development of the situation from this moment until the explosion of August, 1792. The destruction of royal emblems led straight to the sack of the Tuileries, the struggle for power to the deposition of the King, and the talk of republicanism to the Convention and Commune. Even the monarchical Constitution of 1791 was built of materials that were

capable of reconstruction into the republican Constitution of 1793.

But within three weeks of the return from Varennes came another event which without August 10 and its sequel cannot be understood. The movement for the deposition of the King, and for setting up in his place a Regency, or an Orléanist dynasty, or some other form of executive government—the word 'republic' was carefully avoided—came to a head in the petition deposited and signed on the altar of the country in the Champ de Mars on July 17, 1791. Some disorder that arose, and the lynching of two men by the demonstrators, was made an excuse by the Municipality of Paris to call out the National Guard, and to fire upon the crowd. This was the 'Massacre of the Champ de Mars.' It was followed by a proscription of the more advanced members of the Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs. Danton had to take a country holiday, Marat went into hiding, and suspended his paper, and even Robespierre changed his lodgings. This further embittered the feelings of the Paris mob against so unexpected a show of force on the part of the dominant bourgeoisie. The result was that, when Paris rose, a year later, it was for vengeance, not only on the King, but also on the Government. The answer to Bailly and Lafayette's declaration of war in July, 1791, was the revolutionary Commune of August, 1792: the sequel to the massacre of July 17 was the prison massacres of September 2.

The third crucial event—the King's acceptance of the Constitution in September, 1791—seemed at first to close the Revolution in a conventionally happy ending. But in reality this satisfied nobody—not Louis, who was acting against his expressed convictions, or the people, who knew that he was insincere, or the Royalist refugees, who held that he had compromised the crown, or Sieyès' 'passive citizens,' whom the Constitution in its final form disfranchized more effectively than ever, or even the majority in the Assembly, who had secured the King's signature to

a document in which they did not wholly believe, and were now going out of office into an ungrateful and unsympathetic world. For, with the signing of the Constitution, the work of the Constituent Assembly was done, and a new body elected under the Constitution took its place. Moreover, either under an impulse of self-sacrifice, or to cover their fear that in any case they would stand little chance of re-election, the Constituents had decreed that none of them should be re-eligible for the new Assembly. This opened the field to new men, largely drawn from the proprietors and officials created by the Revolution, as well as from the journalists and politicians who had hitherto been on the fringe of the House. Among these last was Brissot.

III

The outlook in October, 1791, seemed so peaceful that Brissot thought of taking a small place in the country to which he could retire in the intervals of political work. But Madame Brissot raised objections on the ground of expense, and it was decided to wait till next year. Within a few weeks the situation had grown so alarming that there was no more talk of country holidays. The after-effects of the events of the summer soon began to be felt. First, as to the position of the King. Among the inscriptions displayed to celebrate Louis's acceptance of the Constitution was one which read *Vive le Roi, s'il est de bon foi!* 'God save the King—if he keeps his word.' And, in fact, the attitude of the people throughout the autumn and winter of 1791–2 was one of suspicion passing into certainty of the King's disloyalty: they sat outside the Tuileries like a cat outside a mouse-hole, waiting for him to make the first false move. Next, Republicanism, driven underground for a time by the proscription of July, soon emerged as a definite party, ready to trade on the weakness of the government, the unpopularity of the crown, and the growing

control of the people of Paris over the Municipality and the National Guard. And, thirdly, the enactment of the Constitution, even if that had been more workable than it actually was, meant also the enactment of a Church settlement which divided the clergy into two camps, and added theological hatred to the other causes of strife. In face of such difficulties, what could the Legislative Assembly be expected to do—a body of untried men, called to administer a Constitution not of their making, under the eyes of the patriots whom they had displaced? Even so, they might perhaps have succeeded, but for two things—party spirit and war.

Nothing is more important for a proper understanding of the Revolution than to realize the thick fog of party spirit in which it was carried on. To an Englishman this is particularly difficult, because he has been trained to exercise his party spirit in the game called the Party System; and among the rules of that game—not always observed as they should be—are the obligation to sink personal differences in party loyalties, not to criticize your opponent's policy unless you have a better one that you are prepared to carry out yourself, and, in case of a national crisis, to help rather than hinder whatever government may be in power. But party politics in the French Assembly meant a very different thing. There were no organized parties or recognized party leaders; only vague groups of members who generally took the same view, and voted on the same side. The so-called Brissotin party, Brissot himself used to say, 'consists of three men—Pétion, Buzot, and myself ; but we have reason on our side (he added characteristically), and that makes us more than 100,000 strong.' There was no sinking of minor differences; therefore these groups were constantly changing. The House was divided, not into a permanent Government and Opposition, but into a shifting majority and minority; so there need be no continuity of policy There was no obligation for a government to conciliate an Oppo-

sition, or for an Opposition to undertake government; so majority legislation might be merely partisan, and minority criticism merely destructive and irresponsible. And, as there was no party loyalty to absorb the shocks of personal enmity, every member was apt to regard himself as a patriot, working directly for the good of his country, and anyone who opposed him as a traitor, intriguing against it. Politics was no longer a tourney with blunted lances that might unhorse an opponent, but a duel with pistol or rapier, in which the object was to kill.

Even this method of conducting politics might have been overruled if the country had remained at peace. But it was made infinitely more harmful by the threat of war during the winter of 1791–2, and by its advent in the following spring. For then party spirit became patriotism, and patriotism took on the colour of religion. It became a sacred duty to denounce, to vilify, and to destroy.

There is no need to trace all the steps by which the pacifist Assembly of the Declaration of May, 1790, had come to look upon war, eighteen months later, as a likely and perhaps desirable event. What determined the issue was rather the attitude of the common people, for whose favours every party in the House and out of it was competing. And to the common people there was one constant incitement to war—the *émigrés*. These refugees, from the King's own brothers and aunts down to ex-deputies and officers of the army, were persons well known in Paris, whose friends and relations might be met any day in the streets, whose discharged coachmen and domestic servants swelled the ranks of the unemployed, and whose agents passed mysteriously to and fro between the capital and the frontier. It was suspected, and with reason, that the *émigrés* were plotting against the Revolution; and everything that went wrong, from food-shortage in Paris to rebellion in the provinces, was put down to their machinations. The result was an explosive state of public opinion which any little accident might detonate into war.

This war fever might have been cooled, had it not been that every party in the State saw in it an opportunity for grasping power. The King, advised by his new War Minister, Narbonne, believed that war would bring him popularity, as it had done ten years before. If it were successful, his political failings would be forgotten; if it led to defeat, the country might still blame the Assembly, and look for salvation to the crown. Within the Feuillant Constitutional majority in the House, which struggled feebly against the tide of war, was the so-called Triumvirate of Barnave, Duport, and Lameth, who secretly corresponded with the Queen, giving her the advice she had already rejected from Mirabeau a year before, and who regarded war as an opportunity for pushing themselves into power. Here was a wonderful chance for Brissot and his Republican friends to capture and express the popular movement—its resentment against the *émigrés* and their foreign protectors, its impatience with the 'Feuillant' policy of the Assembly, and its hatred of the 'Austrian Committee,' which was supposed to have its head-quarters at the Tuileries, and to be plotting a counter-revolution. Here was the road to political power. And if it also led to war—well, victory, they calculated, would make them masters of the situation, able to dictate terms to the Court; or if they were defeated, they could turn popular resentment against the Court and build their republic on the ruins of the throne. It was Brissot who formulated this policy during the winter of 1791–2. He did not make many speeches; but he dictated his views to the *Patriote*, he was known to be the inspirer of his party, and it was he whom Robespierre, the leader of the pacifists, thought it worth while to attack in a series of speeches at the Jacobin Club. Brissot's war, he argued, would be good for the Court, good for the Government, good for the army, good for every interest, in fact, except that of the people. Whether the war were a success or a failure—and the latter seemed to him more likely—it

could only end in a military dictatorship. It was in the course of one of his answers to Robespierre that Brissot expounded a line of defence of which he made use again a year later, but which only serves to show his complete lack of statesmanship. Robespierre had expressed his fear of the treachery of the Court, in case of war. 'I have only one fear,' retorts Brissot—'that we may *not* be betrayed. We need treason. That is where our salvation lies. For there are still dangerous toxins within the body of France, and it needs strong remedies to expel them. Treason will do no harm except to the traitors. Indeed, it will be beneficial to the people. It will remove the one obstacle to the greatness of the French nation'—he means the King. Here is a responsible statesman, the spokesman of the majority in the House, leading the country into war under a King and Ministers who he knows and hopes will betray them, so that he may bring his own party into power. Yet to such an extent had hatred of the Court and fear of the *émigrés* blinded the country, that Brissot's policy could be thought statesmanlike in 1791, and patriotic in 1792.

The war desired for so many bad reasons came in March, 1792. With it came, as Robespierre had anticipated, defeat—not just a 'black week,' which the patriotic defeatists might use to dethrone the King, and afterwards win credit to themselves by retrieving, but six whole months of indiscipline, mismanagement, and disaster, which roused national resentment not only against the King and his Ministers, but also against the Assembly and the Brissotins. No doubt the first effect was the fall of the Feuillant Ministry, and the choice of Brissot's friends—Roland, Servan, and Clavière, to take their place. Popular anger was for a moment appeased, and Brissot could assure his correspondents that 'patriotism and philosophy were at last at the side of the throne.' But within a few weeks the situation was again desperate, and we find one Chépy, a Jacobin agent with the Northern Army, outlining a more extreme policy—the overthrow of the Robespierrist party

('who are bribed to lead us towards anarchy and slavery') the destruction of aristocracy and Feuillantism ('which insolently raise their hideous heads'), and a campaign against the King, to end in his suspension, and, if necessary, in the bestowal of dictatorial powers on the Assembly.

The first attack on the Tuileries (June 20, 1792) was a Brissotin attempt to lead the people and to coerce the King. It was defeated by Louis' passive resistance—he was too stupid to be afraid. A month later the Brissotins' opportunity had passed. The Paris crowd was being organized by emissaries of the Cordeliers Club, and bribed by Santerre's free beer. The Marseillais were arriving. Plans were afoot to end the whole affair by an armed attack on the Tuileries. Brissot, speaking on July 26, found himself opposing the movement for the deposition of the King, and could only excuse himself afterwards on the ground that 'it had been necessary to hedge in order to gain time, either for enlightening public opinion, or for completing the plans for the insurrection.' But, in fact, when August 10 dawned, and the guns of the *fédérés* opened against the Tuileries, it was the lieutenants of Danton and Robespierre who led the attack, whilst 'Guadet, Vergniaud, and Gensonné presided successively' over the inactive and apprehensive Assembly, 'with a dignity that recalled the last days of the Senate of Rome'; and it was on Brissot's own motion that the House, in view of the *fait accompli*, decreed the dismissal of the King's Ministers. It was all that they had left to do.

IV

Up to this point the Brissotins and their opponents had been merely skirmishing for position. With the opening of the Convention in September, 1792, the real battle began. The split in the Jacobin Club on the question of war or peace now widened into the much more serious breach between those who supported and those who opposed the actions of

the revolutionary Commune. For that was now the point at issue. It was the revolutionary Commune—that is, the lower orders of Paris, organized by the leaders of their sectional meetings, led by the sectional contingents of the National Guard, and directed by a self-appointed central committee which had usurped the powers of the old Municipality—it was this temporary dictatorship which had captured the Tuileries, imprisoned the King in the Temple, proscribed the Royalists, and carried through the prison massacres of the first week of September; which had also forced the 'Rump' of the Legislative Assembly, before its dissolution, to pass a number of measures confirming the Revolution of August 10, and securing the triumph of the people. What was to be the sequel of all this? Would the National Convention, elected under the shadow of these great events, not only sanction what the Commune had done, but also allow it to remain in power? Or would it insist upon ruling Paris, like any other part of France, in the name and interests of the country as a whole? This was the real point at stake, in every turn of the party struggle, from September, 1792, to June, 1793, between the Robespierrist and Brissotin factions of the now triumphant Jacobins—or, as they came to be called, the 'Mountain' and the 'Gironde.' They were, indeed, at issue on every point that came up during that stormy year: on the best method of conducting the war—whether through a War Ministry under Parliamentary control, or through an executive committee practically independent of the House; on the fate of the King—whether he should be banished, executed, or kept in prison, and whether or not the nation should be consulted as to his fate; on the need of setting up a revolutionary tribunal, and a dictatorial committee; on the treatment of the revolt in La Vendée; on the means of keeping up the food supply in Paris, and keeping down prices; on international politics, especially the question of war with England; and on the national crisis brought about by the defeats early in 1793 and by

the treachery of Dumouriez, the most successful of the republican generals. Each of these issues became a duel between the Mountain and the Gironde, and led to bitter animosity between Robespierre, Danton, Desmoulins, Marat, and St. Just on the one side, and Brissot, Roland, Pétion, Louvet, and Buzot (to mention no more) on the other. But in the end it was always a trial of strength between Paris and the provinces—Paris standing for centralized and the provinces for decentralized government; Paris for political and financial interests, the provinces, especially the big cities of the south—Lyons, Marseilles, and Bordeaux—for the interests of trade and commerce; Paris for the socialistic desires of the city workers, the disfranchized, and the unemployed, the provinces for the conservative fears of the small landowners and the petty capitalists, for whom the Revolution had already gone far enough.

It is difficult not to sympathize with the Girondins in their attempt to curb the Paris mob, to defeat the 'disorganizers' (as Brissot calls the Paris leaders), and to make the Convention the real government of the country. We cannot but agree when Brissot says that 'three revolutions were needed to save France: the first overturned despotism, the second annihilated royalty, it is for the third to suppress anarchy'; or when he writes, of his opponents, 'their universe is bounded by the narrow limits of the Paris Jacobins: I see and embrace in my horizon France, Europe, and the future generations.' The Girondists of 1793 did stand for a wider outlook, a more liberal government, and a saner view of equality than their opponents. But we must also admit that, while the views of the Girondists were wiser in the abstract, they were less appropriate to the circumstances of the moment, and that their government was as inefficient as their political methods were provocative and ill-advised. They voted for the King's death, yet laid themselves open to the charge of having tried to save him. They established a Committee

and a Tribunal, and lost control of them both. They were too lenient in their treatment of dishonest officials, food-hoarders, and profiteers. They embittered the provinces against Paris, and called it patriotism. They indulged in every form of personal abuse to crush their political enemies, and thought it an outrage when they themselves were proscribed.

When the end comes we cannot help being sorry for them, especially for Brissot, whom life has so often duped, and who (to use a modern metaphor) registers pathos so effectively. On April 5, 1793, Marat struck the first blow in a circular issued by the Jacobins. 'The Counter-revolution,' he said, 'is in the Government, in the National Convention itself. . . . Let us arrest all the enemies of the Revolution, and all suspected persons. Let us exterminate without pity every conspirator, unless we wish to be exterminated ourselves.' Five days later Marat was denounced by Pétion, put on his trial, and (within a fortnight) acquitted. This Girondin reverse was driven home by the publication of Desmoulins' slanderous but damaging pamphlet, *Histoire des Girondins*, on May 17. There could now be only one end to the struggle. 'For the last two or three days,' writes Brissot on May 19, 'we have been in horrible torment. Half the deputies dare not sleep at home. I haven't left my lodgings yet, but no one could be more convinced that we are marked down for a St. Bartholomew's massacre. . . . I have heard with my own ears street-orators saying, "there have been enough cooks and coachmen guillotined: it is time that some of the Conventionals should lose their heads"; and the names of the twenty-two (proscribed Girondins) are always the first suggested.' The last political move of the Girondins—the appointment of a Commission of twelve members to arrest the leaders of the Commune—was made the very next day, but was defeated by popular agitation within a week. At the same time Brissot issued his final appeal to the country. It is headed 'to his constituents,' and the preface

is dated May 22nd. It makes the usual charge, that the convention has been intimidated by the leaders of the Jacobin Club, with their 'doctrine of eternal insurrection'; and it denounces, as the climax of their crimes, the 'Pride's Purge' which they are now planning, with a cruelty surpassing that of Cromwell, against the Girondin members. After an eloquent enough attack on the club, the pamphlet spreads out into interminable abuse, till it becomes merely tiresome. 'Anarchists! robbers!' it ends, 'You may now strike. I have done my duty. I have told truths that will survive me—truths that will at least efface the disgrace with which you would like to crown my name —truths that will prove to all France that good men have constantly exerted their whole strength to open the eyes of France, and to preserve her liberty.' On May 29 a large majority of the Paris sections sent in their adherence to a self-constituted revolutionary committee, which declared a state of insurrection, displaced the General Council of the Commune, and put forward a programme of popular demands, including the impeachment of the Girondin leaders. On June 2, by surrounding the House with troops, the demonstrators intimidated the majority of the Convention into decreeing their arrest. The people had once more dictated its will to Parliament; Paris had once more overruled the provinces.

This was Brissot's St. Bartholomew; and the massacre was not long delayed. Of the twenty-nine members named in the decree of arrest, twelve, including Brissot, escaped from Paris on June 2, and eight more, including Pétion, before the end of the month. The others remained under police supervision in their homes. On July 8, St. Just, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, read a Report, on the strength of which, twenty days later, and exactly a year before the fall of his own party, nine of the arrested Girondins were to be put upon their trial, and twenty-one who had fled to be declared outlaws. This meant not only that they were liable to arrest at sight, and execution on

mere proof of their identity, but also that anyone who helped them to escape was likely to share their fate. They wandered desperately westwards and southwards, trying to rouse the Royalist parts of Brittany and La Vendée against Paris—their 'federalism' now self-confessed. They hid in attics and cellars, in caves and cornfields. One by one they were hunted down by their own countrymen, as though they were escaped convicts. Some were caught and ruthlessly executed. Two were found dead in the fields, their bodies half eaten by dogs. One, Roland, when he heard of his wife's execution, walked out of Rouen, rather than compromise the friends with whom he was hiding, and stabbed himself by the roadside. Meanwhile the murder of Marat by a girl who had come under Girondin influence in Normandy led to the preparation of a fresh Report (that of Amar, October 3), and a large number of new arrests. Ultimately twenty-one Girondins were put on their trial on October 24th, found guilty, and executed within a week.

Among these was Brissot. After escaping from Paris on June 2 he had taken the road to Chartres (his birthplace), Nevers, and the south, with a false passport and a faithful friend. They were arrested at Moulins on the 10th, travelling in a carriage with a few clothes, two guide-books, some paper money, and a brace of English pistols; and they were sent back to Paris. Brissot had no defence but his conscience, and the only weapon he knew how to use was his pen. He wrote long letters to the Convention, explaining his flight and asking to be heard; to the Committee, comparing himself to Cicero flying before the dagger of Clodius, and denying (untruthfully) any recent relations with Dumouriez. 'I did not fly,' he explains, 'to sow the seed of civil war in the *départements*, or to preach federalism, but to tell them that unless the Republic remains one and indivisible it is lost; that the Convention, being the central point of the Republic, should be its hope of salvation; but that, to this end, the liberty and safety of

all its members must be secured against the enterprises of factious men.' 'Of what am I really accused?' he goes on. 'Of wishing that disorder should give place to order, and arbitrariness to law; that the rule of the brigands shall come to an end, and that men shall be led to love the Republic, instead of to hate it for its system of terror; of wishing to establish equality between the *départements*, and to end the system by which the brigands are enslaving all the other *départements* in the name of Paris, and draining them of all their vitality and all their wealth.' We have five more appeals written from Brissot's prison in Paris, the Abbaye, between June 24 and July 1. Then a long silence; and a final group of letters to his family, written from the Conciergerie during his trial, and ending with his farewell to his wife, when he knows that he is doomed: 'Good-bye, my darling; dry your tears; mine are wetting the paper as I write. We shall be parted, but not eternally.'

In prison, wrote one of his companions, 'Brissot was grave and thoughtful, with the air of a philosopher struggling against misfortune,' and troubled not for himself, but for his country. He refused to make his confession, as some of the others did, to the priest who visited them; but when they asked him whether he believed that there was an eternal life and recompense in another world, he replied, Yes, he did. When his sentence was pronounced, says an eye-witness, 'he had scarcely heard the fatal word, "death" when his arms fell to his side, and his head dropped suddenly upon his breast.' It was the gesture of a man whose natural weakness was suddenly deprived of some supernatural source of strength, the collapse of the marionette when the unseen manipulator drops the strings. And if there has been something a little theatrical in all Brissot's life—if we have never been able to take his heroics quite seriously, or to be convinced by his jerky movements and artificial poses—yet no one need be ashamed to feel for his handkerchief as the curtain goes down.

V

'I never liked Brissot as a politician,' wrote Dumont to Romilly a month later: 'no one was ever more intoxicated by passion: but that does not prevent me from doing justice to his virtues, to his private character, to his disinterestedness, to his social qualities as a husband, a father, and a friend, and as the intrepid advocate of the wretched negroes. . . . The vanity of being looked on as a leader no doubt contributed to his faults, the weakness of his judgment hurried him into false measures, and the violence of the people did the rest. He was one of those who sincerely believe that what is called the will of the people is a justification of everything, and he has done as much mischief by the enthusiasm of liberty as many others have done by the enthusiasm of religion. For (he goes on) the power of absolution assumed by the Romish Church has precisely the same hold on the consciences of men as political enthusiasm has on their understandings.' 'He was a grown-up child,' says another who knew him, 'always ready to be duped, and quite incapable of duping anyone else. . . . He possessed talent as much as he lacked foresight. He knew all about history, and nothing about human nature: he could easily envisage a wide circle of political affairs, and yet could see nothing beyond the end of his nose. Always very anxious to prove that he was right, he never mastered the means of being so. In a word, he had all the qualities to win prestige in a party, and to lead it to its fall; and that was precisely what he did.' Interested in too many causes, writing too much and too easily on them all, 'he never had time to hold himself in any one attitude, gesture, or characteristic remark. He was never able to stop anywhere, till, led by the implacable logic of revolution, he reached the scaffold. He perished the victim of his own error, and the martyr to his own imaginings: his hands pure either of blood or gold—nei-

ther mercenary like Mirabeau, or ferocious like Danton, nor self-indulgent like Desmoulins or Vergniaud; neither a cynic like Marat nor hypocritical like Robespierre.' Robespierre perhaps disliked him more than any of the Gironde, because he saw in him a pale parody of his own features. Like Robespierre, 'he was the devotee of a cause, which he embodied, for which he lived, and for which he died'—the vision of France as a federalized republic, on the American or Swiss model, in which liberty, equality, and fraternity should be achieved by the free, equal, and friendly co-operation of every department in national self-government. 'In the Girondins Robespierre only killed a party; in Brissot he guillotined an idea.'

LOUVET

JEAN BAPTISTE LOUVET

1760 Born in Paris.

1786 *Faublas*, Part I.

1789 *Faublas*, Part II.
Living with 'Lodoiska' (Marguerite Dennelle).
Paris justifié.

1791 *Émilie de Varmont.*
La Sentinelle.

1792 Deputy to the Convention.
A Maximilien Robespierre et ses royalistes.

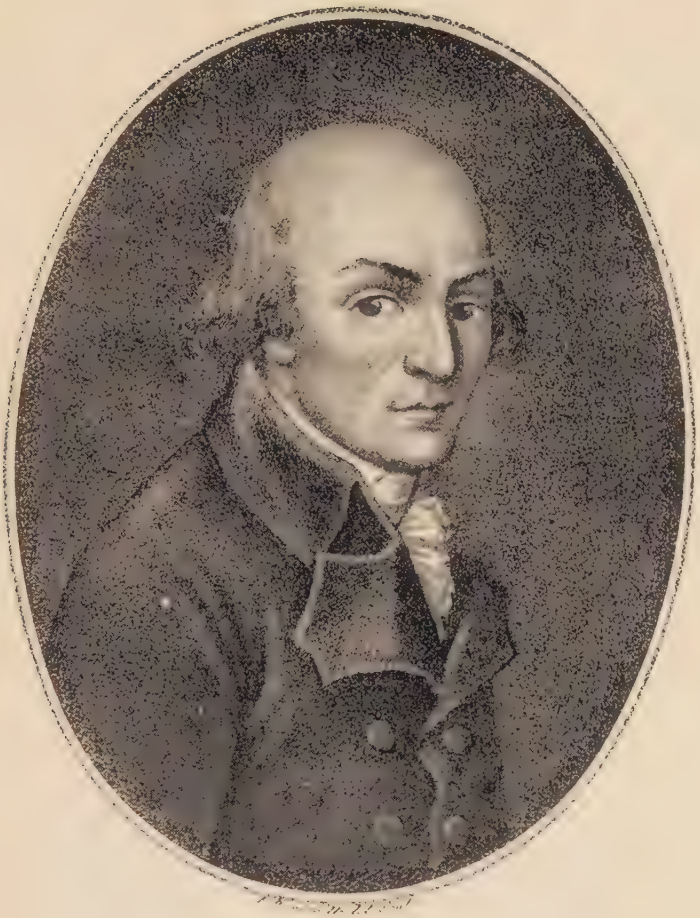
1793 *A la Convention nationale*, etc.
Proscription and flight.

1795 Opens bookshop in Paris.
Récit de mes périls.
Returns to political life.

1797 Died, æt. 37.

AUTHORITIES:

J. B. Louvet, *Faublas, Émilie de Varmont, Mémoires.*
Rivers, *Louvet: Revolutionist and Romance-writer* (1910).



J. B. LOUVET.

Député au Conseil des Cinq Cents par le dépt de la haute Vienne.

from an engraving by F. Bonneville

LOUVET

I

ON February 10, 1795, it was announced in the Paris papers that a new book-seller's and publisher's shop would be opened at 24 Galérie Neuve, Palais Égalité, by Jean Baptiste Louvet and his wife. It was the time of the anti-Jacobin reaction following the death of Robespierre. The persecuted Girondins were being recalled to the Convention. They came back like ghosts, hardly knowing whether they or their friends were still alive. When Louvet—it was his first venture in printing—published his *Récit de mes périls*, he added in a footnote that he believed he was the sole survivor of the seven original deputies for the Gironde. Salles, Guadet, Barbaroux, and Valady were known to be dead: the chances against Pétion or Buzot being still alive, he thought, were 1,000 to 1. He did not yet know that their dead bodies had been found in a field, half eaten by dogs, more than six months previously.

It was not long before the story of Louvet's adventures brought many visitors to the shop in the Palais Égalité. He seemed, in the miracle of his survival, to be a second Lazarus. Nor was the sight-seer's interest lessened when it was realized that Louvet was the handsome and amorous hero, and his wife the beautiful 'Lodoiska' of his novel *Faublas*—the last and most famous romance of the days before the Revolution. 'A wretched cloaca of a book' it seemed to Carlyle, 'without depth even as a cloaca'; but, to less Puritanical taste, a lively, witty, sentimental, and entirely artificial epic, whose gallant lords and ladies (it is true) would have been quite as much at home in the fretted halls of the Arabian Nights or the scented gardens of the

Decameron as in the gilded salons of Versailles. Nor was the book entirely without serious intentions. 'I hope,' says Louvet in his *Mémoires*, 'that every impartial reader will have the fairness to allow that, amongst the frivolities of which it is full there are to be found, at least in the serious passages, and wherever the author expresses his own opinions, a great love of philosophy, and especially of republican principles, pretty rare at the time when it was written.'

Among the visitors who came to see the originals of this romance was the French actress, Louise Fusil: and her experience may serve for that of all. In place of the handsome Faublas she had imagined she found 'a thin, bilious little man, of awkward bearing and in the shabbiest attire'; while the beautiful Lodoiska was 'ugly, dark, pitted with smallpox, the most common-looking person. I was so disenchanted,' she says, 'that I could not believe my eyes.'

In this incident is summed up the whole of Louvet's character and career under the Revolution. He lived, as he wrote, in an atmosphere of perpetual make-belief. Reality never touched him or his Lodoiska. They surrounded themselves with an impenetrable aura of romance. In themselves they were a quite commonplace couple. In their assumed characters they won fame, and almost achieved greatness.

II

Louvet was born in Paris in 1760, under an imitation literary star; for his home was a stationer's shop in the rue des Écrivains; and though he suffered a good deal from 'a hard and brutal father, of too common a turn of mind to appreciate his son's talents,' and from a brother six years older than himself, yet he was given an education that fitted him, at the age of seventeen, to become successively a printer's foreman, the secretary of a

learned mineralogist, and a book-seller's assistant. It was apparently this last post which gave him enough leisure to read for the Law, and enough money to retire into the country, and begin the writing of his famous romance.

The first part of *Faublas*, printed in seven small volumes at the author's expense, was published in 1786, and gave him both fame and fortune. It was followed by the second part of the story, in six more volumes, in 1789. The whole work was evolved from the fairyland of Louvet's imagination—the only country in which he was really at home—and was inspired throughout by his love for the lady who became the Lodoiska of an important episode in the story—Marguerite Dennelle, the playmate of his childhood, the unhappy child-wife of a rich old jeweller, and from 1789 onwards his mistress and (afterwards) his wife.

Louvet was already living with Marguerite at Nemours when the news of the fall of the Bastille turned him into a revolutionist. 'At once,' he says, 'I accepted from her hands a gift that everything rendered precious—the tricolour cockade. The emotion which I felt, but could not express, and the tears which started to my eyes, as she tied the red, white, and blue ribbons to my hat, were perhaps a presentiment of the hard toil in which I was one day to be involved by the great adventure which at present only indirectly affected me.' He had, indeed, already visited the Assembly at Versailles; but it was not until the autumn that he brought his Lodoiska to Paris, and plunged into the political whirlpool.

The people's march to Versailles and the attack on the palace on October 5–6 had become a theme for accusation and counter-accusation. Mounier had written, blaming Paris for the outrage. Louvet, who had been at Versailles at the time, wrote an indignant pamphlet in answer to Mounier, and called it *Paris justifié*. It gained him membership of the Jacobin Club, and the ear of the political public. But he made no speech, except at meetings of his Section, till more than two years afterwards. He thought

he could do more for the cause by his pen than by his voice. During 1790-1 he wrote three plays on political subjects: *L'Anobli Conspirateur* (an attack on titled Royalists), *L'Élection et l'audience du grand Lama Sispi* (a satire on Pope Pius VI), and *La Grande Revue des armées noire et blanche* (making fun of the *émigré* army of Coblenz). The last of these was produced at the Théâtre Molière, and ran for over three weeks. The others were refused by the managers, who thought their satire too strong for the public taste.

It was in 1791 that Louvet hit on the idea of exploiting his talents as a novelist in the public cause. *Émilie de Varmont*, or (as the sub-title runs in the English translation of 1798) *Divorce dictated by necessity; to which are added the amours of Father Sévin*, is a romantic, and, indeed, melodramatic novel, told in the form of letters, with a highly complicated plot. It is obviously based on the experience of Louvet's Lodoiska, whose husband had refused to give her a divorce. It puts, in a highly coloured form, five hard cases—those (1) of a girl (Dorothy) whose wicked mother has driven her into a nunnery; (2) of her sister (Emily), persecuted by a villainous illegitimate brother (Varmont), married to escape him to a man (Bovile) whom she does not love, and believing herself to be a widow, when this man is reported drowned at sea; (3) of Bovile's entanglement, thinking Emily dead, with another lady (Eleanora, Madame d'Étioles); (4) of the new lover (Dolerval) by whom Emily is now courted; and (5) of the village curé, Father Sévin, prevented by his vow of celibacy from marrying Emily, whom he silently adores. After incredible complications and misunderstandings, the plot leads up to a great *éclaircissement* towards the end of the third volume, when Bovile, before departing on ship-board with his Eleanora, 'there silently to indulge their sorrows and their hopes,' sums up in his parting speech the purpose of the book. 'When that happy day shines forth,' he says, prophesying the Revolution, 'its beams shall instantly dis-

pel a dark host of prejudices, ancient and contemptible as the ignorance and superstition which gave them birth. Then, added he, squeezing my hand (it is Emily who describes the scene) your dear Dorothy shall no longer sigh in vain; for the cloisters shall be forced to open their gates, and suffer their victims to recover their liberty; then poor Father Sévin, now so wretched (his hopeless love for Emily had in fact driven him off his head), will be able to find some consolation upon earth; for celibacy, hunted and pursued to the very altar, shall no longer be permitted to devour whole generations of the human species; then especially, continued he, falling on his knees before Madame d'Étioles, our tribunals shall no longer resound with those suits for divorces, prosecuted with so much scandal, ob tained at the expense of so much shame, and productive of no other consequence than that of condemning young people, who are thus separated but not disunited, to drag out the remainder of their lives between the evils of celibacy on the one hand, and the crime of adultery on the other.' Only one law, he thinks, is needed to set everything right —one which will make divorce easy. 'Then Dolerval will obtain the woman he loves, and Bovile—the happy Bovile —will recover his Eleanora.' Meanwhile the two ladies join Dorothy in her nunnery (Eleanora apparently forgetting her engagement for a sea voyage with Bovile) till the new law enables them to marry the men they love; and poor, mad Father Sévin is left harmlessly addressing an imaginary bride—'Charming fair! dearly beloved! enchanting woman! my soul! my life! Come! Haste! Come to-morrow! To-morrow the priests will be married!'

In point of fact a law to allow the marriage of priests was moved in the Assembly by Robespierre on May 30, 1790; and a divorce law, under which marriages were dissolved with a rapidity which must have satisfied all Louvet's requirements, was enacted in September, 1792. Louvet's imaginary world thus suddenly found a point

of contact with the world of political fact. The fairy bubble was pricked. He never wrote another romance.

Besides, he was by now being sucked into the central swirl of the Revolution. He attended the meetings of his Section, enlisted in the National Guard, made a patriotic donation, and sat on a jury. For a long time he avoided the responsibilities of leadership. But he was, he says, one of the small number of clear-headed thinkers who realized before the end of 1791 the intrigues of the politicians, and the treachery of the Court; and he thought it his duty, after consulting Lodoiska, to buckle on his armour, and to 'descend into the terrible lists.' In December, 1791, he headed a deputation of his Section, the Lombards, to the Legislative Assembly, and presented, in a speech which he regarded as one of his best compositions, a 'Petition against the Princes.' He was rewarded by a place on the Correspondence Committee of the Jacobins; and, thus encouraged, soon afterwards made his first speech at the club.

The Jacobins were at this time sharply divided on the war question into a militant faction headed by Brissot and a pacifist party led by Robespierre. Louvet's account of this comparatively simple situation was almost as fantastic as one of his own fairy-tales. There were, he said, four factions: the Feuillants, headed by Lafayette, who was encouraging a foreign invasion in order to crush the Jacobins, and to set up an English constitution; the Cordeliers, under Danton, Robespierre, and Marat, who aimed at replacing Louis XVI by the Duke of Orléans—Danton and Robespierre being all the time secret rivals for a Dictatorship; the 'pure' Jacobins, including Condorcet, Roland, and Brissot, who aimed at a Republic; and the Court party, which used all the others for its own purposes, and reckoned that if Lafayette could be encouraged to admit a foreign army, and the Jacobins to sacrifice themselves in an attack on the Tuileries, there would be nothing left of the Constitution of 1791, and no chance for the idea of an

English Constitution or of a Republic—in fact, nothing to prevent the restoration of the old régime. It is clear that Louvet—though he claims at this time never even to have seen Brissot—was one of the 'pure' Jacobins: which accounts for the fact that his speech was not reported in the club journal, but was loudly praised in Brissot's *Patriote*. Nor is it surprising to find that his next public appearance is in a personal attack on Robespierre. The speech, he says, was one of his best, and so overwhelmed Robespierre that he could find nothing to say in reply, but spent days writing an answer, while hired agents of the Cordeliers libelled Louvet at the cafés and street corners.

During the spring and early summer of 1792, Louvet found the 'lists' becoming more and more dangerous, and the part allotted to him, as a regular supporter of the Brissotin party, always difficult, and sometimes absurd. Thus, in January, he organized a solemn oath and covenant for patriots who bound themselves to eat no sugar until the profiteers reduced its price to twenty sous a pound; in February he proposed that no women should be allowed to attend the debates at the Jacobins; in March he defended the authors of the outrages at Avignon; and at the end of May he presented another petition from the Lombards, demanding that the Sections should be allowed to remain permanently in session—a move towards the popular demonstration of June 20. Finally he was persuaded by his friends the Rolands to use his literary talents in producing the pink broadsheets headed *La Sentinelle*, which were posted twice a week at the street corners, and which did so much to rouse Paris against the Court.

III

Louvet had now burnt his boats, and there was no going back on his party allegiance. When he entered the Convention in September, 1792, he was reckoned an adherent of the

Gironde, and Brissot's nominee. His wife was a close friend of Mme Roland and Mme Talma. He himself was constantly to be met with Vergniaud, Brissot, Dumouriez, and the other leaders of the Gironde. Dumont quotes him as an instance of Mme Roland's tendency to make a hero of anyone who talked republicanism. 'He possessed, it is true, wit, courage, and vivacity; but I am at a loss (he says) to conceive how a virtuous woman could ever mistake the libertine author of *Faublas* for a severe republican.' So he was led on, in the flattering atmosphere of Girondin dinner-parties, to the greatest blunder of his career—his second and irretrievable attack on Robespierre. His bitterness against Robespierre was not entirely political. He had a personal grudge, too, believing that Robespierre had prevented his inclusion in the Brissotin Ministry of 1792, as Minister of Justice, and tracing (with an imagination sharpened by disappointment) every national disaster to this source. It was partly this grievance, and partly his instinct for a dramatic situation, which prompted Louvet's intervention. The scene is described by the English traveller, Dr. Moore, who 'heard that a debate of importance was expected,' and made a point of being present. The proceedings opened with a report on the state of Paris by Roland, who accused the Commune of the crimes of September, and alleged a Robespierrist plot against the lives of the Girondin leaders. Robespierre replied, and soon got onto a subject of which he never tired of speaking—his own virtues. 'A system of calumny is established,' said he with a lofty voice, 'and against whom is it directed? against a zealous patriot. Yet who is there among you who dares rise and accuse me to my face?' '*Moi!*' exclaimed a voice from one end of the hall. There was a profound silence; in the midst of which a thin, lank, pale-faced man stalked along the hall like a spectre; and being come directly opposite to the tribune, he fixed Robespierre, and said, '*Oui, Robespierre, c'est moi qui t'accuse.*' It was Jean Baptiste Louvet. Robespierre was confounded: he stood motion-

less, and turned pale; he could not have seemed more alarmed had a bleeding head spoken to him from a charger. Danton, to save the situation, tried to divert the debate to the fruitful subject of Marat's delinquencies. But the House was intrigued by Louvet's theatrical intervention, and decreed that he should be heard. Danton exclaimed, 'I desire that the accuser would put his finger into the wound.' 'I intend it,' replied Louvet, 'but why does Danton scream beforehand?' The speech which followed is no more than a string of anti-Jacobin commonplaces—the intrigues by which Robespierre controls the Jacobin Club and the Commune; his complicity in the September massacres; the attempt then made to include Roland and Brissot among the victims; his association with Marat; and their attacks upon the Government and the Assembly. Louvet concluded by saying that he 'hoped they would pronounce a decree against all those monsters who instigate to murder and assassination against a faction which from personal ambition was tearing the Republic in pieces; and that they would also decree that the Executive Power, in cases of commotion, might call upon all the military force in the *département* of Paris, and order it to act for the restoration of tranquillity in the manner it judged expedient.' 'The indignation (says Dr. Moore) which Louvet's speech raised against Robespierre was prodigious; at some particular parts I thought his person in danger. . . . Although he drew the attack on himself by his impudent boasting, yet he was taken unprepared; the galleries in particular had been neglected on that day, for the audience showed no partiality—a thing so unusual when he spoke, that it is believed greatly to have helped to disconcert him.' But the effect of Louvet's speech wore off when it was seen that none of his party was ready to back him up; and the House did not press for a division, which, if it had been taken at once, might have gone against Robespierre. He was given a week in which to prepare his reply. It was almost a vote of confidence.

When the resumed debate came on 'the galleries were crowded at an early hour' and 'almost entirely filled with women,' who were said specially to admire Robespierre's eloquence. His defence was applauded, and Louvet's attempt to reply was howled down. The sense of the House was rightly interpreted by Barère, who closed the debate by putting both Robespierre and Louvet in their places. 'It is time,' he said (Dr Moore is again the reporter) 'to estimate those little undertakers of revolutions at their just value; it is time to give over thinking of them and their manœuvres: for my part, I can see neither Syllas nor Cromwells in men of such moderate capacities; and instead of bestowing any more time on them and their intrigues, we ought to turn our attention to the great questions which interest the republic.' As he had no chance to speak it, Louvet printed his reply. Its title, *A Maximilien Robespierre et ses royalistes*, answers to its main contention —the existence of a Robespierrist-Royalist plot in September, 1792, against the lives of the Girondin leaders. Its oddly expressed English motto—'In politiks there exists only two parties in France. The first is composed of philosophers, the second of thieves, robbers, and murderers'—shows sufficiently its irreconcilable and unreasonable temper. 'Legislators!' cries Louvet, 'when on August 10 the nation, tired of the yoke of kings, heard the guns thunder against the royal stronghold, it thought itself saved, and breathed again. Alas! royalism was already returning over the dead bodies of the first days of September, and sweetening the milk for which it is always athirst. Royalism reckoned on restoring itself to full vigour, towards the end of the same month, by means of a vaster massacre. And to-day it is royalism which wills that we shall enjoy neither repose nor laws; royalism which relies on anarchy to restore to it by devious ways both its power and its victims.' . . . And there is much more in the same strain. Every page of the pamphlet bears out Aulard's judgment that Louvet's rhetoric is entirely superficial,

'affecting the nerves rather than the reason,' and that 'his speeches are like novels; so that even in his most serious statements he is only a political romanticist.' Nevertheless, the mere nerve and noise of the man made his support valuable to the Girondins, and his hostility formidable to Robespierre, especially as his pamphlet was officially circulated throughout the *départements*—such were the political methods of the day—by the Minister of the Interior, Roland. *Père Duchesne*, Hébert's gutter-paper, reported in revenge a dinner-party at the Rolands, at which 'at the top of the table, to the right of the virtuous Roland, sat Bussatier; to the left, the accuser of Robespierre, that dirty little tyke Louvet, who, with his papier-mâché face and hollow eyes, threw covetous glances on the wife of the virtuous Roland.' Louvet soon found himself expelled from the Jacobins, and marked down for destruction.

The first test of strength, and the first victory of the Jacobins, came with the King's trial. Here, as in so many other matters, the Girondins started from the same premises as their opponents, but failed to face the only logical conclusion to be drawn from them. Nothing could be more violent, for instance, than Louvet's attack on 'Louis the Last,' as he calls him, in the final number of the *Sentinelle*, which placarded the Paris streets on November 21, 1792. In the centre was a picture of a hand with a quill pen writing on a wall the words of Daniel—'God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.' And on both sides of this picture was an application of the text to the character and reign of the unfortunate Louis, written in grossly exaggerated and rhetorical style. It was as a result of his crimes, and those of his Ministers, says Louvet, that the Revolution came about. 'Since then, what has this man done? He has sworn fidelity to his country, and has done all he could to betray her; with the gold lavished upon him he has corrupted the constituents, the Ministers, the chiefs of the troops; he has fawned on the enemies of

France; he has cringed before the priests who have rent her; welcomed the nobles who burnt her; subsidized the foreigners who laid her waste; in short, greedy of assassinations, tortures, and crimes of every kind, surpassing in horrors all that the imagination of man could lend to the tyrants of old, he meditates on the slaughter, in one day, of all the patriots from the islands of America to the banks of the Rhine, from the Pyrenees to the shores of the Baltic. It is time to check his criminal career.' One would think there could be only one punishment fit for such a monster, supposing him to be more than a mere figment of Louvet's imagination, namely, summary execution. And yet, when the question came to a decision, Louvet first voted that the verdict of guilty against Louis should not stand without an appeal to the people, and then that the sentence of death should not be carried out until the Constitution was completed and ratified by the nation. Some of the Girondins were more logical, and voted for death unconditionally; some even less so, voting for detention or banishment. The party was divided and discredited. 'They wanted to save the King,' says Mercier, with brutal directness, 'but they did not want to lose their popularity.' The result was that the King was executed, and their popularity destroyed.

There followed the Dumouriez affair. If one could believe Louvet, Dumouriez's defeat and desertion were simply the result of Jacobin jealousy. His army was deliberately starved of men and material by Pache, the Jacobin Minister of War; the Jacobin commissioners in Belgium went out of their way to make the new government unpopular; the publications of Marat, 'the chief English agent,' destroyed the confidence of the army in its general; and at the decisive moment of Neerwinden it was the paid agents of the Cordeliers who first cried '*Sauve qui peut!*' and started the rout. Nor is that the whole story, in which fact and fancy are so wildly mixed together. Dumouriez must be imagined consenting to a criminal conspiracy

with Marat and Delacroix, the friend of Danton. Declaring himself in favour of a monarchy, he announces his intention of marching on Paris, to support the 'healthy majority' of the Convention (i.e., the Girondins) against the Jacobins. This gives the Jacobins an excuse to designate their opponents as traitors and Royalists, and to reorganize, for the night of March 10, the massacre which failed on September 2. For Louvet has the whole plot dated and detailed. He describes how Lodoiska, at 9 o'clock that night, heard 'a fearful tumult and horrible cries' proceeding from the Jacobin Club; how, from the gallery of the hall, she 'heard a thousand calumnies, a thousand horrors expressed'; saw the lights extinguished, swords drawn, and the crowd rushing off to the Cordeliers for reinforcements; how Louvet, when he heard of it, warned Pétion and other Girondin leaders; how Kervélégan roused a battalion of federal volunteers from Brest, who stood all night under arms; how 'the brave and unfortunate Beurnonville, Minister of War, climbed his garden wall, and patrolled the streets with some of his friends', and how Pétion opened his window and said, 'It is raining; that will be the end of it.' And so it was; though Louvet insists that it was the 400 men of Brest, and not a mere shower of rain, that prevented this second St. Bartholomew.

Three days later Vergniaud was put up in the Assembly to denounce the conspiracy, but took fright, talked vaguely of royalism, and failed to attribute the blame to the Jacobin leaders. Louvet, burning to attack the real enemy, was refused a hearing, and once more had to be content with printing his speech, under the title of *A la Convention nationale et à mes Commettans sur la Conspiration du* 10 *mars et la faction d'Orléans*. Six thousand copies of this pamphlet were distributed in Paris, and it would have had 'an incalculable influence,' its author thought, in the provinces, had not Jacobin agents seized the copies that were sent through the post. It was in the form of an attack on

Garat, Minister of Justice, who had professed himself unable to discover any evidence of the 'great conspiracy' of March 10; and it retorted upon the Jacobins the charges of royalism, and of collusion in the treachery of Dumouriez. Writing later, in April, 1794, 'from the caverns of the Jura,' Louvet took credit for the correctness of his political prophesying. 'To-day,' he says, 'Marat is an acknowledged Royalist, and Robespierre will soon be an out-and-out dictator. I have watched them since 1792, and (what is perhaps more to my credit) I have had the courage to say what I thought. In this last writing about the night of March 10, I was not content to announce their object, I also indicated their means. I made it clear that they would reach tyranny by the way of brigandage; that to reign they would pillage, and to pillage they would assassinate. I said all I could possibly say at that moment; what it was impossible to say, I hinted. I left nothing undone to expose both factions in all their hideousness.'

By way of comment on this last passage, the editor of Louvet's *Memoirs* prints an extract from a letter written to Louvet by his friend Dussault in 1795, which is worth quoting, because it anticipates the line of criticism that we have been following. Dussault says that he could understand Louvet in 1793, when the Girondins were fantastically accused of federalism, 'employing his well-known talent as a writer of romance to prove that his adversaries were royalists: But to-day,' he goes on, 'when your enemies are beaten, can any reasonable person excuse you when you produce another volume of your romance, and travesty Marat, of all people, as a Royalist?' Louvet's intention evidently is to discredit the Royalists, but the only result is to whitewash Marat. 'You can find no fault with him; you enjoy giving him a character; you make him, like God, in your own image. . . . The favourite heroes of your romances ought to be jealous of him; you have never flattered anyone more—not even Lodoiska.' It is a fair criticism. We have seen again and again how Louvet's

liking for fiction ran away with his judgment. The pamphlet about March 10, his 'political last will and testament,' was only a final proof of his unfitness for political life.

IV

To Louvet the revolution of May 31–June 2 came as no surprise: it was the natural sequel of March 10, from which he dated the beginning of the Terror, and of May 20, when (according to his *Memoirs*) a second plot to kidnap and murder the Girondin leaders, inspired by Pache, now Mayor of Paris, also miscarried. Moreover it bore, to his apocalyptic imagination, all the marks of the Jacobin beast: it was organized by foreigners—the Spaniard Guzman, the Swiss Pache, the Italian Dufourni, and Marat, who was born at Neuchâtel; part of its aim was to distract attention from the crimes of Hébert, whom the Girondist Committee of Twenty-one had convicted of attacks on the Convention; Hérault-Séchelles, at that time President of the Assembly, was himself an agent of the foreign powers, and played into the hands of a force of '3,000 brigands destined for the La Vendée campaign,' who were intentionally detained in Paris, so that they might carry through the Jacobin *coup d'état*. Nevertheless, Louvet makes one admission, which deserves notice. From most accounts of the Revolution of June, 1793, it would be inferred that it was an armed rising of the Paris mob against a few unarmed and impotent men. But Louvet says that on May 31 not only he and his companions—Buzot, Barbaroux, Bergoing, and Rabaut-St.-Étienne—were well armed when they went to the House, but also that the Section Butte des Moulins, which sympathized with them, 'had the good sense to see that it should no more surrender its arms than its innocence, and that only victory could justify both: accordingly it entrenched itself in the Palais Royal, loaded its muskets, unlimbered its guns,

charged them with grape-shot, and stood with lighted match in hand.' True, they ended by fraternizing with the enemy, so that the day closed with embracing and dancing, and no more was heard of armed resistance to the will of the people. But the incident is significant of the means the Girondins would have used, if they could, to save their party in Paris, and shows that their subsequent attempts to bring about an armed rising in the provinces had to be taken seriously.

Something is said in Louvet's *Memoirs* of the failure of this revolt in Normandy and Brittany; of the Girondist manifesto announcing 'peace, fraternity, and assistance' for the people of Paris, but a *guerre à outrance* and an exemplary punishment for the Municipality, the Cordeliers, and some members of the Mountain; of the talk of obtaining help from England; and of Wimpffen's fatal defeat at Vernon. Charlotte Corday is treated as a saint and martyr. From his cave in the Jura, Louvet prays her to intercede for him, like a saint of the old régime, 'Thou who wilt from henceforth be the idol of the republicans in the Elysium where Thou reposest with Vergniaud, Sidney, and Brutus, hear my final prayers! Ask the Eternal One to protect and save my spouse, and to restore her to me. Ask Him to grant us, in our honourable poverty, a corner of the earth where we may rest our heads, an honest trade by which I may support Lodoiska, a complete obscurity to hide us from our enemies, and at the end some years of love and happiness! Or, if my prayers are not heard, if it be that my Lodoiska has perished on the scaffold (Louvet did not know at this time what had become of her), Ah! at least let me know it at once, so that I may soon pass to the place where Thou reignest, there to meet my wife again, and to hold converse with Thee!' His only regret is that in qualifying to become Saint Charlotte, Corday made the mistake of killing Marat instead of Robespierre.

The rest—and it is the bulk—of Louvet's *Memoirs* is taken up with the account of his wanderings, as a hunted

man, up and down the country roads of France, from the time of his proscription in June, 1793, till his return to Paris after the fall of Robespierre, and the beginning of his new life in February, 1795, in the 'corner of the earth' that St. Charlotte at last granted in answer to his prayers—the bookshop in the Palais Égalité. All this part of the narrative is amazingly well told: there can hardly be a better refugee-story in modern literature. It is as though all Louvet's romantic dreams had come true—in himself. He is now the hero of his own fairy-story. Hardships which, physically, he is unfitted to bear are overcome by sheer love of adventure. Imagination carries him through dangers that prove fatal to his companions. He enjoys every moment of his misery. The story must be read as a whole, or not at all. But it is possible and profitable to quote one passage from the reflections with which it ends —a passage which, modelled on Rousseau, shows Louvet indulging himself to the top of his bent. 'All I have suffered, all I have enjoyed in this refuge (he is writing from the forest-depths of the Jura) you cannot conceive. But at least I have nurtured my independence. All the noble sentiments of my heart, all its most praiseworthy impulses —I could give them free rein, in the midst of this solitary wood, where I spend whole days of repose, and yet find them too short. Here, lying on my back under the dark fir-trees, I sigh to think of the family that I shall never see again; here I weep when I remember my country—its promised glory, and the shame with which it is soiled; the prosperity it would have enjoyed, and the ruins that encumber it now; its liberty of a day, and its eternal servitude. It is here, too, that, calling love to my aid, and, with love, hope, its inseparable comrade, I engrave on the tender bark of the beech-tree the initials of my dear, who may be restored to me to-morrow. And then, to relieve my vivid imagination, I tramp the rustic earth with impatient foot; I quickly traverse the silent labyrinths of this retreat; I scale laboriously the huge rocks that are flung together

at random, sharply pointed, and overgrown with immense beech-trees; and soon, suspended on the topmost banks of that abyss, in whose depths an unnavigable torrent rolls and roars with antediluvian waves, I recover myself, I meditate, I express my boldest thoughts. What mortal man before me ever reached this spot? Here, far from men and face to face with God, be there never so many revolutions, and rage the tyrants as they will, I AM FREE!'

How crude this all sounds, how unreal, how young! It is the sort of stuff we find and blush for in an old diary, written in our 'teens, during that first romantic visit to Loch Lomond, or to Lucerne. Yet we can never understand these eighteenth-century revolutionists, if we think of them as sharing our reticence as to natural emotions, or our elderly attitude towards romance. They *were* crude, they indulged facile emotions, they lived in a cheaply coloured world. Many of them had less taste than a Slade student, less political sense than a Union speaker, and less moral balance than a prefect at a Public School. But they fitted their country and their time. Our maturer age can criticize them: but can it, as they did, create?

V

The last two years of Louvet's life go outside the strict limits of the Revolution. But they are remarkable for the degree to which he adapted himself to new conditions, profited by the mistakes of his past, and refused to be drawn into schemes of party revenge. During the spring and summer of 1793—that high noon of the Girondist ghosts—he found himself eloquent and powerful; and whether attacking the Jacobin 'Royalists,' or the Terrorists of Nantes, whether restoring their property to the victims of proscription, or eulogizing Ferraud, killed in the rising of Prairial, he was almost the only Girondin who remained revolutionary and republican to the end. But if his most

eloquent words were spoken in favour of an amnesty for republicans, his last speech in the House was a protest against a measure debarring Royalists from public employment. He had learnt, from his own sufferings, the rare lesson of political toleration.

After the dissolution of the Convention, Louvet became a member of the Five Hundred, but retired in May, 1797. In the Royalist reaction of that summer he found himself once more on the losing side—insulted, mobbed, and forced to move his bookshop to the Faubourg St. Germain. There, on August 25, he died in obscurity at the age of thirty-seven. Lodoiska, in her despair, took poison, but was persuaded to live for the sake of their child.

Physically speaking, Louvet was already an old man at thirty-seven; his emotions had worn him out. But, mentally, we may well think that he was just reaching manhood. He was at last outgrowing that 'sensibility' which was endemic in the young men of his generation. 'That sensibility (writes one of the characters in *Émilie de Varmont*) of which you so often boast to me—can it be a defect in our blood—a family failing, which I have only partially cured in my own constitution by palliatives, but have never been able wholly to eradicate? I vow I feel it springing up and expanding in my bosom! It is very troublesome: it impedes my respiration. When in company with the charming Terville (the lady of his heart), 'tis then that I feel my breath quite stopt; and in my deep amaze I hear myself sigh.' These medical symptoms of love at first sight, and others connected with the opposite emotion, Louvet experienced in his dealings with political friends and enemies. A naturally innocent imagination, living in a world of fairy romance, was poisoned by political ambitions, and its talents perverted to nearly fatal uses. But the man was as essentially harmless as his mind was unworldly; and he lived just long enough to prove that sympathy and imagination have their place among the political virtues.

DANTON

GEORGE JACQUES DANTON

1759 October 26, born at Arcis-sur-Aube.

1780 In Paris.

1785 Called to the Bar.

1787 Married Antoinette Charpentier.

1789 President of Cordeliers Club.

1791 Administrator of *Département* of Paris.
Assistant Procureur of Commune.

1792 August 11, Minister of Justice.
September, Member of Convention.
December, 1st Mission to Belgium.

1793 January, 2nd Mission to Belgium.
April, Member of Committee of Public Safety.
June, married Sophie Gély.
October, retirement to country.
November, return to Paris.

1794 April 5, executed, æt. 34.

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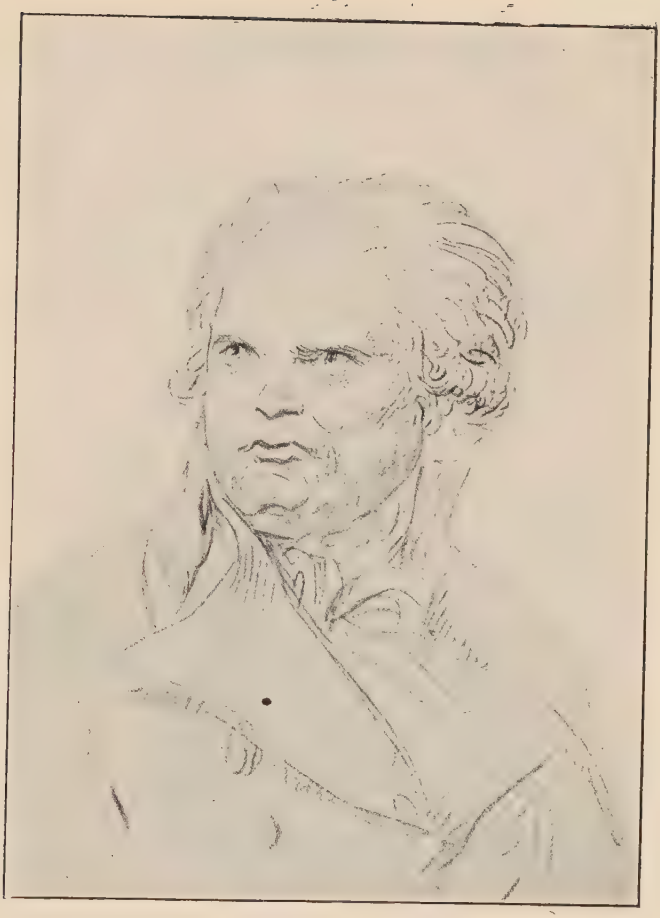

from a drawing by David in the Saint-Albin Collection

DANTON

I

IF there is any value in the method of 'history by personal interview,' it will by now have become apparent from how many different angles it was possible to approach, and is profitable to study, the French Revolution, and what a variety of aims and motives underlay the events of 1789–94. In Sieyès we saw the philosophic reformer trying to bring order out of chaos, and to reduce the warring elements in the State to an innocuous balance of power; in Mirabeau a man of immense driving power, who tried to transfuse his vitality into an anæmic King and a distracted Assembly; and in Brissot an enthusiastic amateur in everything, who lived and died for a party programme. Sieyès was essentially a clerical don, Mirabeau a cosmopolitan aristocrat, Brissot a middle-class journalist. Each brought to the Revolution the traditions of a social class, the training of a special experience, the point of view of a peculiar type of mind. Each tried to master and guide the Revolution. Each found it too big for his grasp, and was in turn swept away.

Danton is a new type. In him, for the first time, we are getting behind the book-theories of Sieyès and the journalistic *clichés* of Brissot to the simpler ideas and more original language of the mass of Frenchmen; we are getting down, through the upper-class airs of Mirabeau and the middle-class ambitions of Brissot, to the bed-rock naturalism of a man who never was, and never wanted to be, anything but himself. For though Danton's father had moved from the family cottage at Plancy to a town house at Arcis, and had become a 'bourgeois,' though Danton himself could boast a classical education, and looked for a

career to Paris and the Bar; though he kept a good library, and could quote his Horace and Vergil; yet he remained all his life a countryman, with simple and rather coarse country tastes, and was always glad to get away from the noise and rush of the capital to the quiet garden and snug fireside of his family home. Nor is it fanciful to see in this background of his political life the source both of his weakness and of his strength—of his inability to throw himself continuously or whole-heartedly into politics, on the one hand; and on the other, of that impression of simplicity and great-heartedness which, in spite of all his failings, and almost alone among the revolutionary leaders, he seems to convey.

Details of his childhood—his dislike of school, his love of bathing in the neighbouring Aube, the encounters with farmyard animals which cost him a scarred lip and a broken nose, or his playing truant from College to see Louis XVI crowned king at Rheims—these things do not add much to the picture. But Arcis was his chosen place of retirement in 1791, in 1792, and again for six weeks in the autumn of 1793, when he was in danger of proscription, or sick of party strife; and it was to the countryside of his childhood that his thoughts went back during his last hours in prison: like Falstaff, he 'babbled o' green fields' before he died.

Little is known of Danton's pre-revolutionary career in Paris. He learnt the law, as Brissot learnt it, by attendance in chambers and at the Courts. He was called to the Bar at Rheims, where the needful certificates could be cheaply obtained. He drank and played dominoes at the Café du Parnasse, and married the proprietor's handsome and well-endowed daughter. He invested his capital in the purchase of a legal post which returned an adequate income, and settled down to a happy family life in a lodging-house on the south bank of the Seine. But what he thought of life, or how he came to be a revolutionist, we do not know.

II

'On July 13, 1789, in the evening, a lawyer named Lavaux visited the convent of the Cordeliers, the meeting-place of one of the new "districts" of Paris. There, standing on a table, was a speaker, who, in "a voice of frenzy", summoned the citizens to arms "to repulse 15,000 brigands mobilized at Montmartre, and an army of 30,000 which was ready to pour into Paris, loot it, and massacre its inhabitants." The speaker, who seemed a regular fanatic, called for a popular rising; and he did not stop speaking till he was exhausted. In this "madman," Lavaux was astonished to recognize his old legal acquaintance, Danton, whom he had always regarded hitherto as a peaceful citizen.' Three months later, on October 3, another visitor to the Cordeliers—only a boy at the time—saw Danton presiding at a meeting, and remembered all his life the impression made by 'his great height, his athletic build, and the irregularity of his pock-marked features,' as well as his 'rough, loud voice' and 'dramatic gestures.'

The big refectory of the disused Franciscan monastery where these scenes took place had become a meeting-place and debating-hall for the politicians and patriots of that part of Paris. It was Danton's quarter, inhabited chiefly by lawyers, publishers, booksellers, literary men, and theatrical folk. There Momoro published his pamphlets, and Loustalot his *Révolutions de Paris*. There Brune composed his *Journal de la Cour et de la Ville*, little thinking that within a few years he was to become one of Napoleon's marshals: and there a certain Dr. Marat was beginning to print the vitriolic pages of *L'Ami du Peuple*. Close by the Dantons lived their special friends the Desmoulins, the tragedian Chénier, and Fabre, a writer of comedies. Fréron, Billaud-Varenne, Manuel, Chaumette, Paré, Collot d'Herbois, all belonged to the same district; even Simon the cobbler, afterwards jailer to the little Louis

XVII, and the butcher-politician Legendre. All kinds of grievances are muttered in this quarter, every sort of political theory aired, after dinner, over coffee and dominoes, at the Café Procope. And there, where once sat Diderot and Voltaire, sits Danton, the spokesman of the most revolutionary district in Paris, which will defy the arrest-warrants of the Châtelet, and dictate its views to the Commune. The Jacobin Club across the river—the 'Friends of the Constitution,' as its members call themselves—may have more famous names on its books, and a more direct influence over the Assembly—Danton belongs to it too—but this 'Society of the Friends of the Rights of Men and Citizens' that meets at the Cordeliers, is no Government club, with a subscription beyond the means of poor men, but a rallying-point of the working classes, giving, at the price of a penny a month, protection against official injustice, and a part to play in every patriotic demonstration. This was Danton's club, Danton's kingdom.

Another scene in a career which suggests dramatic treatment. It is the eve of August 10, 1792, when republicanism and war fever suddenly broke out into the sack of the Tuileries, and the deposition of the King. The place is a lodging-house in the Cordeliers district, where Camille Desmoulins and his wife Lucile live in close touch with their friends the Dantons. It is Lucile who writes down afterwards the events of a night that none of them could ever forget. They are trivial, but they are true; and the story is worth quoting, because it shows what the Revolution felt like from inside.

'I had come back from the country on August 8. Already everyone was very excited. An attempt had been made to assassinate Robespierre. On the 9th, I had some of the Marseillais to dinner, and we had quite an amusing time. After dinner we all went to the Dantons'. Danton's wife was crying, and could not have been more unhappy. Her little boy seemed stupefied. Danton was in a resolute

mood. For my part, I laughed as though I were crazy. They were afraid that the affair might not come off. Though I wasn't at all sure, I told them it would, as though I knew all about it. "But how can you laugh so?" Madame Danton asked me. "Alas!" said I, "perhaps it's an omen that I shall be crying before the night's over." In the evening we took Madame Charpentier, Danton's mother-in-law, home. It was so fine that we took a turn or two in the street. There were plenty of people about. We turned back, and sat down by the café in the Place d'Odéon. A number of Sansculottes came by shouting *Vive la Nation!* then some mounted troops; and finally great crowds of people. I was frightened. "Let's go away," I said to Madame Danton. She laughed at my fears: but when I persisted she became frightened too, and we left. "Goodbye," I said to her mother; "you'll soon hear the tocsin sounding." When I got back to Danton's house I found Madame Robert there, and several others. Danton was agitated. I ran to Madame Robert, and said, "Are they going to sound the tocsin?" "Yes," she said, "It is to be to-night." I heard every word and said nothing. Soon I saw all the men arming themselves. Camille, my dearest Camille, arrived with a gun. O God! I backed into the corner and hid my face in my hands and started crying. But I didn't wish to show such weakness, or to tell Camille before them all that I didn't want him to get mixed up in the business; so I waited for a chance to speak to him without being overheard, and told him all my fears. He cheered me up by telling me that he would not leave Danton's side: but I have heard since that he did expose himself. Fréron behaved like a man who had made up his mind to be killed. "I'm tired of life," he said, "and I'm determined to die." Every time a detachment passed the house, I thought I should never see our friends again. I went to bury myself in the drawing-room, which was unlighted, so as not to see all these preparations. There was no one in the street: everybody had gone home. Our

patriots started off. I sat down by one of the beds, overwhelmed, exhausted, dozing at times, and, if I tried to speak, talking distractedly. Danton went to bed: he did not seem very excited: he hardly left the house at all. It was now nearly midnight. They came to look for him several times. At last he went off to the Town Hall. The tocsin rang at the Cordeliers; it went on ringing a long time. All alone, bathed in tears, kneeling at the window, my face hidden in my handkerchief, I listened to the fatal bell. They came to comfort me in vain. It seemed to me that the day which preceded this fatal one had been our last. Danton returned. Madame Robert, very worried about her husband, who had been deputed by his Section to go to the Luxembourg, ran up to Danton; but he only gave a very vague reply to her questions, and threw himself on his bed. People came several times with news—some good, some bad. I began to guess that their plan was to go to the Tuileries. I told them, sobbing, that I thought I should faint. In vain Madame Robert asked for news of her husband: nobody could tell her anything. She thought he must be marching with the troops of the district. "If he is killed," she said to me, "I shall not survive him. But Danton there—imagine him as leader! If my husband is killed I'm woman enough to murder him!"—and her eyes rolled. From that moment I never left her side—how could I tell what might not happen? I didn't know what she might do. And so we passed the night, in cruel suspense. At one o'clock Camille came back and slept with his head on my shoulder. Madame Danton was by my side, and seemed to be preparing to hear of her husband's death. "No," she said, "I can't stay here a minute longer." It was now broad daylight; so I suggested that she should come and rest in my room. Camille lay down. I made up a camp-bed in the drawing-room with a mattress and coverlet; she threw herself down on it and got some repose. I went to bed too, and half slept to the sound of the tocsin which was ringing on every side. We got up. Camille went

off, assuring me that he would not expose himself. We had breakfast. Ten o'clock, eleven o'clock passed, without our hearing a word. We picked up some of yesterday's papers, sat on the sofa in the drawing-room and tried to read. Madame Danton read me an article; and it was while she was doing this that I thought I heard the sound of cannon-fire. She listens, hears it, grows pale, and falls down in a faint. I took off her clothes. I could have fallen down on the spot myself, but I was held up by the necessity of helping her. She came round. Jeannette, Camille's cook, was bleating like a goat. She wanted Mr. V. Q.'s blood, because he said that Camille was to blame for the whole business. We heard shouting and weeping in the street; we thought Paris would soon be running with blood. But we cheered each other up, and set out for Danton's house. People were crying, "To arms!" and somebody was running in that direction. We found the door on the Cour de Commerce shut. We knocked, called, but no one came to open it. We tried to get in through the baker's shop, but he shut the door in our faces. I was furious. At last they let us in. For a long time we had no news, except that they told us we had won. At one o'clock somebody came to tell us what had happened. Some of the Marseillais had been killed. But the stories were cruel. Camille arrived, and told me that the first head he had seen fall was that of Suleau. Robert had been in the city, and had seen the awful spectacle of the massacre of the Swiss Guard. He came in after dinner and gave us a terrible account of what he had seen; and all day we heard talk of nothing else but what had happened. Next day, the 11th, we watched the funeral procession of the Marseillais. God, what a sight! How it wrung our hearts! Camille and I spent the night at the Roberts' house. I was terrified—I don't know why; it didn't seem that we should be safe at home. Next day, the 12th, when we got back, I heard that Danton had been made a Minister.'

Does that seem a very confusing account of a great

event—both trivial and unheroic? It well may. But great events, when you are actually taking part in them, are made up of a number of unimportant details; and revolutions are seldom romantic, except in retrospect, and at a safe distance. For five years, it needs to be remembered, behind the pageants and street-fighting of the Revolution, were the friendly dinners and the family firesides; behind the speeches and gesturing of public men the fears and anxieties of their wives and sisters—a whole underworld of everyday interests and emotions which hardly appears in history, but which contains the real life of the people, like a maze of dingy side-streets opening into a brightly illuminated thoroughfare. Dramatize Lucile's story, and it becomes a scene from one of Mr. Sean O'Casey's plays of the Irish Revolution.

One thing we should like to know, which this story does not tell. What part did Danton really play in the Revolution of August, 1792? He had been away from Paris immediately beforehand; he was not one of the revolutionary committee which organized the attack on the Tuileries; and he took no part in the fighting. But he was the leader of the Cordeliers Section, which entertained the Marseillais, and whose battalion fought at their side. As Deputy-Procureur of the Commune he was largely responsible for the support it gave to the rising. And it must have been mainly because he was thought, at least, to have inspired the victory of the 10th that he, alone of the popular leaders, was included in the Ministry of the 11th. Afterwards all the politicians claimed credit for August 10th, though remarkably few of them seem to have risked their lives. Danton's claim was, at any rate, one of the best.

III

Eight months later it was clear that the deposition of the King had removed the only obstacle to a fight to a

finish between the two parties in the State—the Mountain and the Gironde. The war, after six months' success, was again going badly. Dumouriez, the hero of Valmy, and the chief asset of the Girondin Government, was out of sympathy both with their republicanism and with their foreign policy. Instead of conquering Holland, his army was retreating from Belgium. It was feared that the retreat might turn into a march on Paris, and an attempt to overthrow the Convention, in the name of an Orléanist substitute for Louis XVI. Anyone who was known to have had dealings with Dumouriez was compromised. Danton had been Minister of Justice, and in effect head of the Government, at the time of Valmy, and had backed Dumouriez ever since. In March, 1793, he had been sent with his friend Delacroix on a mission to the Belgian army to sound Dumouriez's intentions. He had discovered that Dumouriez was playing a treacherous part, and deserved to be deprived of his command. He might have taken a strong line, and dismissed him on the spot. Instead, he had left him in command, and reported to the Committee in Paris. The Girondins saw in this an opportunity for transferring to Danton the odium that Dumouriez's treachery would otherwise fasten on themselves; and they launched their attack upon him in the Convention on April 1. It is this debate which makes the next scene in our drama, and it shall be described in the actual words of the official report.

Lasource opens the attack. He does not accept Danton's reasons for not arresting Dumouriez. He charges both him and Delacroix with being accessories to Dumouriez's plot. While he is preparing to march on Paris they are obstructing the defence, and diverting attention from real to imaginary dangers. More, he hints plainly enough that Danton is aiming at a personal Dictatorship —the most dangerous charge that can be brought against any statesman, since the fall of the throne. 'I demand,' he ends, 'that to prove to the nations that we will have no

truck with tyrants, each of us shall undertake to put to death anyone who tries to make himself either a king or a dictator.' (This is greeted with unanimous cheering. Applause, and cries of 'Hear! Hear!' break out again and again. The whole Assembly rises to its feet, and all the members, holding up their hands, take the oath after Lasource. Applause from the public galleries.) This is no sooner over than Biroteau, another Girondin, jumps to his feet, and says that at a recent committee meeting Fabre, a friend of Danton, had proposed, by way of saving the country, that they should have a king. (A number of members shout, 'That's a lie!') Danton protests, 'That is a wicked charge. It was you who defended the King, and now you are trying to put your crimes on to us.' Biroteau tries to go on with his story, but is stopped; and it is agreed to refer the whole matter to a committee. But the Jacobins have been roused by the attack, and shout for Danton to defend himself. The public in the galleries join in. After considerable uproar, it is decided that he shall be heard.

In the speech that follows, Danton must be imagined standing at a kind of reading-desk below the President's seat, half-way along one side of the House: immediately in front of him is the non-party majority of the Assembly called the 'Marsh'; to his right the Girondin group; and to his left the Jacobins, sitting in the high bank of seats called the 'Mountain.' He begins his speech by turning towards his friends on the left. 'I must begin,' he says, 'by rendering homage to you citizens who have your seats on this Mountain. You are the true friends of the safety of the people, for your judgment was better than mine. I have supposed for a long time that, whatever my natural impetuosity, I ought to curb my natural powers, and employ, in the difficult circumstances in which my mission has placed me, a moderation such as events required. You reproach me with feebleness. You are right. I confess it to all France. It was our business to denounce those who, through inexperience or wickedness, have consistently in-

tended that the tyrant should escape from the penalty of the law.' (A number of members jump to their feet, crying, 'Hear! Hear!' and pointing to the members sitting on the right. Murmurs and violent recriminations are heard among this party. Danton's next words are drowned in more murmurs from the right.) 'You will have to answer me,' he shouts, turning towards the Girondins. One of them, Grangeneuve, tries to ask Danton a question. 'You have no right to speak!' shouts the Left. '*A l'Abbaye!*' (Send him to prison!) For a time Danton keeps to the letter of Lasource's charges, and is heard quietly. But he soon returns to his attack on the Gironde. It is they who drove Dumouriez into treason, they who have trumped up this charge against himself, they who are arming the provinces against Paris, to punish it for its patriotism. (At this, a number of deputies are on their feet again, pointing at the Right, and shouting, 'Hear! Hear!') 'Don't forget their little supper-parties!' prompts Marat. 'Yes,' says Danton, 'it was they who dined clandestinely with Dumouriez, when he was in Paris.' (Applause). 'Lasource was there!' cries Marat, again working himself up; 'Oh! I will denounce every one of the traitors!' 'Yes,' continues Danton, 'they and they alone are the accomplices in this plot (loud applause from the Left, and from the public galleries), and it is I who accuse them! I have nothing to fear from Dumouriez, or from anyone else with whom I have had dealings. Let Dumouriez produce a single line of mine which can justify the shadow of a charge against me, and you may have my head. . . . I *have* had letters from him, and they are enough to prove that there is nothing in common between his political ideas and mine. It is the Federalists. . . .' ('Name! Name!' interrupts the Right), It is a trap; Marat is on his feet again, facing the interrupters: 'No, you will not succeed in murdering the country!' he cries. 'Do you really want me to say whom I mean?' asks Danton. 'Yes, yes!' they cry. 'Listen, then,' he says; and Marat, turning once more to the Right,

echoes, 'Listen!' 'Will you have the whole thing in one word?' ('Yes, yes!' again from the Right.) 'Very well, then,' says Danton. 'I suppose there can be no more truce between the Mountain—the patriots who voted for the death of the tyrant—and those cowards who tried to save him by blackguarding us up and down the country' (and at that many of the Left are on their feet simultaneously cheering, and there are cries of 'We will save the country'). But he does not attack any of them by name, except Roland; and the next part of his speech passes in comparative silence: the Girondins are obviously getting the worst of it. Towards the end they make one more effort. Danton has asked that the Committee of Inquiry shall begin its work at once: 'Then everything will be cleared up,' he says; 'then we shall no longer be duped by the insinuation that we only destroyed one throne in order to establish another. The kings themselves know better. One blow struck at any of them makes a man their mortal enemy.' He pauses for a moment; perhaps he is going to sit down; when, in the silence, a single voice is heard from the Right—'And Cromwell?' Danton turns on the interpellator in a blaze of fury. 'You are a vile wretch to tell me that I am like Cromwell! I denounce you to the nation!' (There is a chorus of voices demanding a vote of censure on the interrupter; others are for sending him to prison.) 'Yes,' Danton goes on, 'I demand the punishment of the vile criminal who has the effrontery to call me a Cromwell; I demand his imprisonment! (Applause). Why do you suppose that this Cromwell you talk of was a friend of kings?' (A voice, 'He was a king himself.') 'He was feared,' retorts Danton, 'because he had the power. And here, too, those who have struck down the French tyrant shall be feared, they shall be all the more feared, now that liberty has been fattened on the blood of the tyrant.' And then he turns towards the Jacobins on the Left, and drives home point after point, inciting them against the Girondins. 'Rally round me,' he cries, 'you who executed the tyrant's sen-

tence against these cowards (with a gesture towards the Right) who tried to spare him. Close your ranks. Mobilize the people in arms to crush the enemy abroad and the enemy at home. Bring to confusion by your energy and steadfastness every criminal, every moderate (he is still facing the Left, but emphasizing every phrase with a gesture towards the Right), and every man who has insulted you in the provinces! Have nothing more to do with them! (Loud applause from a great part of the Assembly, and from the public galleries) . . . I have entrenched myself,' he ends, 'in the citadel of reason. I will sortie from it with the artillery of truth; and the rascals who have tried to accuse me will be ground to powder!' (He comes down from the tribune in the midst of wild cheering from most of the Assembly, and from the onlookers. Many members of the Right rush towards him to embrace him. Prolonged applause.)

There is no need to insist on the power of Danton's rhetoric. Two months after this speech the Girondin leaders were proscribed: before the end of the year they were dead.

IV

But as the destruction of the King had led to the fall of the Girondins, so now the destruction of the Girondins became Danton's death-warrant. By the fatal logic of revolution he inherited the imputations under which they had fallen. He was now held responsible for the September massacres; it was he who would have saved the King and Queen, had he dared; he who was implicated with Dumouriez. It is he whose fraudulent friends make money out of army contracts, and speculate in assignats; and it is he who would intervene to stop the Terror before it has done its work, and so ruin Robespierre's plans for a reign of virtue under the patronage of the Supreme Being. These charges were never proved. But Danton laid him-

self open to them by his carelessness in money matters, his irresponsible way of talking about serious things, and his liking for more or less disreputable company. He was too easy-going to care how his life appeared to strait-laced people like Robespierre; he was too idle for the routine of politics, and too indifferent to save his own reputation.

From April to July, 1793, Danton was the foremost member of the Committee of Public Safety, which was now the centre of the Government. As in August, 1792, he effectually led the country. But as soon as the defeated Girondists disappeared, feuds began to divide the victorious Mountain. Early in July, Danton's place on the Committee was taken by Robespierre. In the middle of September, ill, and disgusted with party attacks upon him, Danton obtained leave of absence from his parliamentary duties, and retired with his second wife, whom he had married in June, to his beloved Arcis.

Six weeks later he came back to public life, only to find himself out of favour in the Convention, and out of sympathy with Robespierre and the Committee.

To this governing clique there seemed to be two dangers in the political situation—on the one hand a movement among the lower orders of Paris which discredited the Revolution by its attacks upon religion, and made the Government unpopular by its demands for cheap food, and for violent measures against profiteers and food-hoarders; and on the other hand a movement among business men and financiers to relax the imprisonments and other restrictions which the state of the war no longer demanded, and to bring the Terror to an end—steps which the Committee may have meant to take at its own time, and in its own way, but which it resented having forced upon it. Of the first movement the leaders were Hébert, Chaumette, and their friends; with the second Danton and Desmoulins became identified. As early as February 27th Danton must have felt himself threatened

in an official report by St. Just, in which it was declared, 'The republic is built on the ruins of everything anti-republican. There are three sins against the republic: one is to be sorry for State prisoners; another is to be opposed to the rule of virtue; and the third is to be opposed to the Terror.' When, in March, the Hébertists were arrested and executed, Danton must have known that his turn would come next. 'They would never dare to do it,' he is reported to have said; but it is the remark of a man not sure of his position. On March 19 he made his last speech in the House. On the 22nd he met Robespierre for the last time. It was at a dinner with some friends. It is said that he urged Robespierre, as he had done before, to disown the intrigues in which several members of the Committee were engaged against him. 'Let us forget our private resentments,' he pleaded, 'and think only of the country, its needs, and its dangers.' Robespierre listened in chilly silence; then asked sarcastically, 'I suppose a man of your moral principles would not think that anyone deserved punishment?' 'I suppose *you* would be annoyed,' retorted Danton, 'if none did!' 'Liberty,' said Robespierre angrily, 'cannot be secured unless criminals lose their heads.' According to one version of the scene, Danton's eyes filled with tears. According to another, a few minutes later, he was embracing Robespierre, amidst a scene of general emotion, in which Robespierre alone did not join, remaining 'as cold as a block of marble.' And that very evening Danton's name was added to the list of the proscribed. A week later, on the evening of the 10th, the warrant of arrest was signed, and within a few hours Danton and his friends were in prison.

One last scene. It is 10 o'clock on the morning of April 2, 1794. We are in the great room, with its gilded ceiling and marble floor, in which the Paris *Parlement* used to meet. The tapestries have gone from the walls; the carpet with its royal *fleurs-de-lys* has been rolled up; the King's throne and Dürer's picture of the Christ have been taken

away. The room is now furnished with tables and platforms of common wood, for a sitting of the Revolutionary Tribunal. At the end of the room, behind a long table, are the judges, and in front of them, at a small table, the Public Prosecutor—all in dark clothes, with black plumes in their hats. On their left are more tables and chairs for the jury; on their right a stepped platform for the accused; opposite them the bar at which the witnesses are to give their evidence. The rest of the room is packed with the general public, who overflow into the passages and staircases outside, hoping to hear something of what is going on.

It was not a trial at all in our sense of the word; but a public debate, in which the Judges and Prosecutor tried to incriminate the prisoners, and the prisoners (who had no Counsel to defend them) tried to turn the tables on their opponents by eloquent speeches or clever retorts. Evidence went for little, even with the professional jurymen, who were accustomed to go by general impressions, and by the demeanour of the accused, and to assume that a prisoner was guilty, unless there were overwhelming proof that he was not. The judges were there not to try a case, but to convict and punish men whom the Government had already condemned. The prisoners knew this; knew that they had little chance of acquittal; knew that it was their last opportunity to make a public demonstration, and to appeal to the crowd. When Danton is asked his name and address, 'My address,' he replies, 'will soon be in nothingness (*le néant*): as for my name, you will find it in the Panthéon of history.' 'My age,' says Desmoulins, 'is thirty-three—that of the Sansculotte Jesus.' There were fourteen prisoners at the beginning of the trial, and sixteen at the end—one being added on the second, and another of the third day of the hearing; and they included not only Danton and his five associates—Fabre, Desmoulins, Philipeaux, Delacroix, and Hérault de Séchelles—but also (to save time, discredit the political prisoners, and confuse the issue) a Spaniard, a Dane, and two Jews charged with

crimes of shady finance. The formal questioning, and the reading of the indictments against all these men, occupied the first day of the trial. On the second day the Court opened at nine o'clock. After more formalities, evidence for the prosecution was given by Cambon—he was the only witness heard. 'Cambon,' Danton asks him, 'do you really believe we are conspirators?' Cambon cannot repress a smile, 'Look! he's laughing!' cries Danton; 'he doesn't believe it! Clerk, write it down that he laughed.' No more witnesses are heard; and most of the day is taken up with Danton's defence—a speech of which only fragments remain, but which was so loud that it drowned the President's bell, and was heard through the open windows of the court by listeners on the far bank of the Seine; and so eloquent that the audience began to take the speaker's side, and Herman (the President of the Tribunal) passed an anxious note to Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor, saying that he would soon have to suspend the sitting. This, when Danton tired for a moment, he did, and the rest of the defence was never heard; for next day the Court took the cases against some of the other prisoners; and on the fourth day the trial was suddenly closured, without any opportunity being given to the accused to call witnesses, or to make their defence. How could this be done? Because Fouquier had written to the Committee asking what he was to do, in view of the importunate demand of the prisoners that witnesses should be heard in their defence; because, just at this moment, a report came of a supposed plot in the Luxembourg prison; and because St. Just cleverly used these materials to play upon the fears of the Convention, and to carry a decree to the effect that 'any prisoner who resists or insults the national justice shall at once be debarred from pleading his case.' Accordingly, when the prisoners were brought into court on the last morning, this decree was read; it was announced that no witnesses would be heard on either side; Danton was refused permission to finish his defence; and the jury were

asked whether they were prepared to arrive at their verdict. After a few minutes' interval, 'The jury,' announced the President, 'are satisfied; the trial is closed.' 'Closed?' shouts Danton: 'Why, it has not begun! You haven't read the evidence; you haven't heard the witnesses!' Desmoulins had brought a written defence with him: he crumpled it up and threw it on the ground. To avoid a scene the prisoners were hurried out of the court before the verdict was given, or the sentence passed. But they knew what both would be.

Early the next afternoon—it was a beautiful spring day, and the lilacs were already blossoming in the Tuileries garden—they were taken in three red-painted carts from the prison to the scaffold—past the café where Danton had met his first wife; past his treacherous friend David, who was sketching his portrait as he went to his death; past the drawn blinds of the house where Robespierre lodged; and through the crowded streets to where, at the foot of a great plaster statue of Liberty, stood the guillotine. Hérault, who was one of the first to die, tried to kiss Danton as he passed; the executioner pulled him away. 'You fool!' said Danton, 'you can't prevent our heads kissing in the basket.' He himself came last. 'You must show my head to the people,' he said to the executioner; 'It is worth it.' And so he died.

V

Danton's reputation has suffered less from his enemies than from his friends. At the time of his death no attempt was made to save him; and in the Thermidorian reaction, when so many victims of the Terror were rehabilitated, no voice was raised in favour of Danton. The moment when he had been great, in August, 1792, was forgotten. He was remembered only as the enemy of the Girondins, and the friend of traitors and profiteers: he was 'well known,' says Lord Holland, 'to have been an unprincipled, cor-

rupt, and dauntless man.' But fifty years after his death, in the reaction against Girondin-worship, and during the anti-clerical movement under the Second Empire, when Robespierre was regarded (rather oddly) as the representative of the Church, a determined attempt was made to reinstate Danton as a national hero. It may be found in a series of books by Robinet, based on information supplied by Danton's two sons, who died in 1849 and 1858. It reappears in Bougeart's life of Danton, and in Beesly's; it colours Michelet, Aulard, and most of the modern histories. The result has been a fresh reaction in the other direction. M. Mathiez, the latest historian of the Revolution, makes Robespierre his hero, and loses no opportunity to blacken the character of Danton and his circle. To him Danton 'was an insatiable gambler, who made a fortune by fishing in troubled waters; a revolutionist who lived by his wits. . . . He protected and squeezed the contractors and bankers by turns, just as he made money both out of the Court and out of the *émigrés*. . . . Alike on the Executive Council and on the Committee of Public Safety he concealed a timid and defeatist policy under the hollow declamations of a high-sounding chauvinism. . . . Turned out of the Government for his secret diplomacy, his Royalist and federalist intrigues, and his suspicious relations with the worst kind of business men, he spent his retirement in dreams of vengeance. He cleverly and furtively impeded the work of the Committee of Public Safety. He became the secret leader of an opposition all the more dangerous as it was intangible and insincere. He gathered round him all the malcontents—the Royalists, by promising them the return of the *émigrés*, and the restoration of the crown; the federalists, by the promise of an amnesty; the business men, manufacturers, and propertied classes, by undertaking to abolish the regulation of prices, the restrictions on trade, and the revolutionary legislation; and the whole class of suspects, by dangling before their eyes the prospect of release from prison. He launched his attack at the

most critical moment, when the Vendéan offensive north of the Loire was complicated by the enemy's success on the Alsace frontier; when Toulon had fallen into English hands, and was still holding out; and when the revolutionary Government was only just beginning to reorganize itself. . . . There is (M. Mathiez concludes) no longer any mystery about the verdict of the Revolutionary Tribunal. We realize why the Convention, after Thermidor, refused to rehabilitate Danton and his band. There are good reasons for the reprobation which attached to Danton's name during three-quarters of the nineteenth century. And we link ourselves up with that tradition.'

If one ignores special pleading on either side, and reads Danton's own speeches, one's first impression is that of a bluff, honest, big-hearted patriot; but one's second feeling is that, under stress, this attitude has no principles and not enough moral courage to support it, and becomes a pose. Danton was a man whose lack of resentment, and liking for low company, passed too easily into a criminal indulgence; whose talk of national unity too often diverted attention from the irregularities of his friends; whose want of political principles and statesmanship made him too easy a prey for cleverer men; and who was deservedly caught in the toils that he spread for others. Not a great man, not a good man, certainly no hero; but a man with great, good, and heroic moments. His own saying sums him up best:—*Périsse mon reputation plutôt que ma patrie;* he valued Danton's honour less highly than that of France.

FABRE D'ÉGLANTINE

PHILIPPE FRANÇOIS NAZAIRE FABRE D'ÉGLANTINE

1750 Born at Carcasonne.

1771 Competes at Toulouse.

1772–87 Travels with theatrical companies.

1787 Settles in Paris.

1790 *Philinte de Molière.*

1792 Secretary to Danton.

1793 Member of Committee of Public Safety.
Involved in affair of *Compagnie des Indes.*
Report on Republican Calendar.

1794 Executed with Danton, æt. 44.

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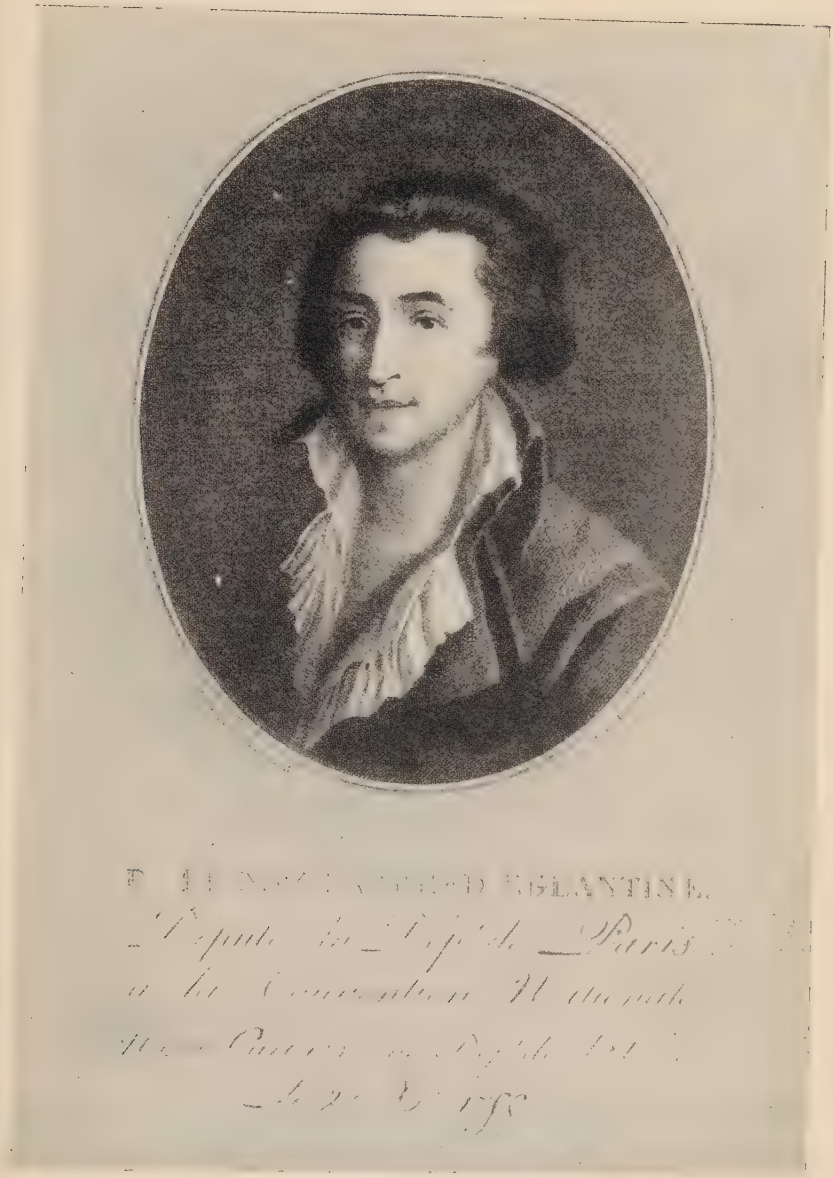

from a print in the Carnavalet Museum

FABRE D'ÉGLANTINE

I

IT was the pleasant custom of French Academies in the eighteenth century to offer open prizes for literary compositions. Although these competitions did not often inspire such epoch-making works as the *Contrat Social*, they afforded to many young men, and among them not a few who were to become leaders of the Revolution, an opportunity of expressing themselves, and of making their first bid for fame. We have already seen Brissot and Robespierre among the essayists.

The oldest of all these societies—the oldest literary society, it is said, in the whole of Europe, founded by the troubadours in the fourteenth century—was the Academy of Floral Sports (Académie des Jeux Floraux) at Toulouse. Every year it offered prizes as pretty as its name—a golden violet, or amaranth, or eglantine—for compositions in poetry or rhetoric. In 1771 one of the prizes offered was for a sonnet in honour of the Blessed Virgin. It was not awarded; but among the unsuccessful competitors was a young student at the Doctrinaires College, named Fabre, who thought (as such persons are apt to do) that he should have had the prize, and who, to console himself, and to add a touch of romance to his not uncommon name, called himself in future Fabre d'Églantine, or (as it would be in our hyphenated form) Eglantine-Smith.

Philippe François Nazaire Fabre was at this time twenty-one. His unromantic father, a linen-draper of Carcasonne, had moved to Limoux and become an advocate

at the *Parlement* of Toulouse—*avocat pauvre et pauvre avocat*, says a contemporary biographer. His mother came from gentlefolk, and one of her uncles was a brigadier in the army. The boy was not happy at home: his mother died when he was only nine, and he was on bad terms with his father. But he got a good, if rather desultory education at College, in poetry, music, painting, engraving, and the elements of law; and soon became ambitious for a more adventurous and amusing life than he could hope for behind the counter of the family shop. Almost at once, after the competition at Toulouse, he seems to have joined a company of strolling players; and for the next fifteen years he lived a completely Bohemian life, which in detail remains as complicated and obscure as that of Molière, but which in essence was that of any artistic adventurer. *Fabre*, says his biographer, *c'est Figaro*. 'Like Figaro, he played the guitar, wrote articles for the paper, and composed comedies; like Figaro, he was a barber in his spare time, and never missed a chance of serenading a pretty girl.' In 1772 he was acting at Grenoble and at Chalon-sur-Saône, the beauties and pleasures of which he described in one of his poems eleven years afterwards. At Troyes, in 1775, he was drawing portraits in pastel at a louis a head, and had an affair, at the house of one of his sitters, with 'an adorable blonde.' The next year, at Chalon again, came a love affair which nearly ended in marriage with Sophie Poudon. During 1776 he was constantly on the move, playing at Chalon, Beauvais, Maçon, Paris, and Namur; and left a trail of broken hearts behind him. 'It was not his appearance that attracted women; for he was small, with a poor shape and feeble build; but his lively expression, his bright eyes, and the charm of his talk, his attentions, and his talents.' His weakness for the other sex nearly led, a year later, to disaster. At Namur he formed a connection with a member of his company, a girl of fifteen and a half, named Catherine Deresmond, and persuaded her to leave her home. The girl's mother

summoned him for 'rape and seduction,' and he escaped 'perpetual banishment,' if not the gallows, only through the intervention of the Governor of the Netherlands. The same year he was at Luxembourg and Paris, where he wrote three poems in honour of the naturalist Buffon, and earned ten louis' reward. In 1778, at Strasbourg, he made another attempt at marriage, and this time successfully; the lady was Marie-Nicole Godin, a granddaughter of the famous author Le Sage, and had been acting in the company under that name. At Maestricht, the next year, Fabre wrote the libretto of a comic opera, *Laure et Pétrarque*, which was set to music by the leader of the theatre orchestra. It was never printed, but seems to have included his most popular song, *Il pleut, il pleut, bergère*. After a visit to Thionville he set up as a miniature painter at Sedan, but with no success; and started a theatrical company of his own, the only result of which was to land him in the debtors' prison. In 1730 he was with Clairville's company at Liège, and used his poetical talents with good effect. Playing at Spa before Gustavus III of Sweden, he recited a poem of his own in which that monarch was eulogized as

> '... that God whom the proud Swede adores,
> Source of his virtues, happiness, and laws';

and earned a presentation in the royal box. A fortnight later, at a fête in honour of Grétry, he leapt on the stage of the local theatre, and declaimed, amidst great enthusiasm, an ode of homage in which a prayer for political freedom was neatly combined with a tribute to the great musician:

> 'Serfdom, avaunt! Here thy oppressive yoke
> Is the last ill our people shall revoke:
> Shine, noble artist, in the Hall of Fame,
> For Freedom's voice, and glory, are the same.

Fabre followed up this effusion with a congratulatory epistle to the Prince-Bishop of Liège, on the anniversary of

his election. But it seems to have done him little good financially; for when he entered on a new theatrical venture next year, with his wife, at Arras and Douai, he had to leave his infant son with a nurse, and his wardrobe at a pawn broker's. At Douai, managing the theatre himself, he had a little more success. But in 1782 we find him at Geneva, and for the season of 1783–4 at Lyons, where he produces a tragedy of his own called *Vesta*, and revenges its failure by a bitter satire on the proprietress and company of the local theatre. At Nîmes, in 1785–6, he had a more successful season, and got good notices in the provincial Press. But at Avignon (1786–7) he could only escape the growing crowd of his creditors by taking refuge in the Doctrinaires College, where he paid for his board by giving lessons in elocution; and so ended much as he had begun, sixteen years ago.

This, at last, was the term of Fabre's vagabond existence. In the summer of 1787 he set off for Paris with the MS. of his first comedy in his pocket; and the autumn found him settled there with his wife, determined to conquer the theatrical capital of Europe.

II

Between September, 1787, and March, 1792, that is, in four and a half years, 11 of Fabre's plays were produced at various Paris theatres—7 comedies, 1 tragedy, 2 comic operas, and 1 farce. They were all in verse—Fabre scorned prose. All of them, except perhaps one of the operas and the farce, contained satirical allusions to society and politics—Fabre fancied himself as a moralist. From 1790 onwards he became a party man, and his plays tended more and more to become political propaganda.

In 1787, *Gens de lettres*, a five-act comedy, refused by the Théâtre-Français, was produced at the Théâtre-Italien and failed. Seeing that it was a provincial satire on Paris

journalists, critics, authors, and publishers, one can understand its being unpopular. A fortnight later, *Augusta*, a tragedy based on the famous de la Barre case, was produced at the same theatre. The critics apparently missed the allusion, and the play only survived six performances. After these two failures Fabre made no more attempts till early in 1789, when *Présomptueux, ou l'Heureux imaginaire*, a comedy in the manner of Molière, was put on at the Théâtre-Français, and was his third failure. There seems to have been some ground for Fabre's belief that it was his reputation as a satirist, and not his inability as a playwright, that was to blame for these disasters: for his next comedy, *Le Collateral*, produced at the Théâtre de Monsieur without notice, instead of the play on the bills, and presumably in the absence of the critics, was loudly applauded, and the audience demanded a repeat performance the following night.

Thus encouraged, Fabre wrote, and produced in February, 1790, at the Théâtre-Français, his best and most characteristic play, *Le Philinte de Molière*. Rousseau, in his *Lettre à d'Alembert*, had said, criticizing Molière, that 'a man of genius might write a new *Misanthrope*, not less true or natural than the Athenian, with all the merits of Molière's character, and infinitely more instructive. The only objection I can see,' he added, 'to such a play is that it could not possibly be a success.' Fabre thought he was a man of genius, determined to write the play, and believed that he could make a success of it. And he did. He put all his talents into it, and all his opinions—his discipleship of Molière, his Rousseauism, his revolutionism, and his dislike of the sentimental dramas of Collin d'Harleville. He had a personal grievance against this writer, whom he believed to have borrowed from one of his plays, and whom he had already attacked in print. Fabre's principles (when he admits any) are so mixed with private prejudice that it would be rash to take *Philinte* too seriously as propaganda. Nevertheless, Fabre persuaded himself that he was doing

a public duty in attacking Collin and his school. His professed object was one with which we are pretty familiar nowadays—to make the theatre a place of serious interest and of political education. 'The theatre,' he writes,

> once the pastime of the fool,
> Becomes, in times of liberty, a school.

This may be good for the public, but it is doubtful whether it improves the drama. Fabre, at any rate, if he had been content to learn from Molière, might have produced masterpieces. Politics ruined his plays, as it ruined his career.

Having conquered the critics with *Philinte*, Fabre returned, with a characteristic laugh at his own seriousness, to comic opera, and produced in July, 1790, *L'Apothécaire*, and in August, 1791, *Isabelle de Salisbury*—a spectacular costume-piece of the reign of Edward III. Each ran to about a dozen performances. To these may be added *L'Intrigue épistolaire*, a five-act farce in verse—an amusing 'imbroglio' in the manner of *The Barber of Seville*—produced in June, 1791. This was Fabre's last success. Meanwhile he was preparing a succession of political comedies, of which three were produced during 1791–2, and a fourth after his death in 1799. *Le Convalescent de qualité* (January, 1791) shows an aristocrat of the old *régime* (drawn from the Duc de Richelieu, who died in 1788) living on into the world of the Revolution, which he thinks has gone quite mad, but finally donning a tricolour cockade, and marrying his daughter to an officer of the National Guard. It is interesting to notice that in January, 1791, five months before the flight to Varennes, Fabre's audience are still Royalist enough to appreciate the patriotic doggerel which he puts into the mouth of his democratic Doctor:

> Say what you will, it suits our present mood
> That Heaven grants a King both just and good.

A happy nature can do anything;
And, if I flatter our beloved King,
I have no criminal or coward's aim;
If he were not loved, I would do the same.
There's not a man—this fact I dare advance—
Howe'er ungrateful, in the whole of France,
But will agree that, save for this wise Prince,
The country's vessel had been wrecked long since.

But five months later the flight to Varennes gave a great impetus to republicanism. Fabre losthis political bearings, as any man might have done in the winter of 1791–2. His treatment of the situation in *L'Hérétière* (November, 1791) and *Le Sot orgueilleux* (March, 1792) was so little to the taste of his audience that the first play ran for two nights and the second only for one. It was this last, apparently, which Courtois afterwards accused of *incivisme*, because 'it brought the Jacobins, the Presidents of Sections, and the highest public officials into contempt': it failed, he says, as it deserved to do; and Desmoulins added that this was due to its obviously aristocratic taint. Fabre did not try again. *Les Usuriers*, a one-act prose play produced in 1793, and sometimes attributed to him, is probably not his work. He is said to have been engaged on a five-act comedy called *L'Orange de Malte* at the time of his death. Another, *Les Précepteurs*, was already finished in 1794, and was printed and produced by the Government five years after his death. It is a dramatic commentary on Rousseau's *Emile*—Rousseau, whom Fabre is said to have admired so much that he stole a pair of his old sabots from the inn-keeper at Ermenonville, rather than be without a relic of the master.

So much for Fabre the player and the playwright. It has been necessary to delay over these aspects of his life, because otherwise we cannot understand what sort of man he was who became one of the inner circle at the Jacobin Club, the confidant of Danton, the dupe of his own intrigues, and the victim of Robespierre.

III

Fabre carried his theatrical character into politics. He was always in make-up. 'He treated the Revolution like a play in which he had a part on the stage, and work to do behind the scenes.' 'His head,' said Danton, 'was one vast imbroglio.' He prided himself as a man of the world and as a dramatist of character upon his knowledge of mankind. But he was too ready to identify his political associates with the *présomptueux*, the *convalescent*, the *sot orgueilleux*, and the other ready-made characters in his portrait-gallery. He knew enough about human nature to be sceptical as to the working of revolutionary Utopias; but not enough to appreciate the passion for liberty and democracy. His Byronic melancholy—which he describes in one of his letters as 'a gloomy, dreadful, and terrifying feeling, a kind of spleen which prostrates me, and numbs my whole imagination; a kind of death of the soul which crushes all my thoughts'—predisposed him to political quarrels. His easy and bitter resentments perverted to base uses his finest quality—a quality which had rather surprisingly survived the strain of a disorderly life—'a hatred of flattery, vice, cruelty, and hypocrisy.' Even in minor ways he offended. He had a habit of surveying the Assembly through his lorgnettes, like a spectator in the stalls of a theatre, which on one occasion at least exasperated Robespierre—he thought it, perhaps, a parody of one of his own mannerisms. He was, no doubt, an intriguer; but never to the degree suggested by his air of mystery, or his pose of superior knowledge. We know his reputation, indeed, chiefly through the accounts of his enemies; but there is no escaping the conclusion that he was regarded by people of all parties as (to use a convenient piece of slang) something of a fraud. This Molière, this Juvenal, this Rousseau, this Figaro, this Don Juan—was he really anything at all? Follow him home from the

House. Off goes the untidy costume of a democrat. Dressed in the height of fashion, he becomes the frivolous frequenter of actresses' drawing-rooms, the author of amorous letters to two mistresses, and part-sharer with Hérault de Séchelles of a third, the notorious Morency. He makes up parties with Caroline Rémy and her friends to visit her baby at Chevreuse, while his legitimate son's education is neglected, and his wife is touring the provinces with a comic opera company. Later, if Courtois's story is true, he quarrels with Caroline, who goes off with a new lover, and instals 'a young person' in her place, adding her furniture to his own; a few days later he turns her on to the streets at midnight, keeps her belongings, and resumes his life with Caroline. This theatrical-looking man with the black curly hair (it is the Morency herself who describes him, if we may identify Fabre with the 'Dorimond' of her *Euphémie*) with the eyes that squint from under close-set eyebrows, with the snub nose, the big mouth, and the olive complexion; this thick-necked, knock-kneed fellow, who is as ready to turn a rhyme for a lady as to fix a neck under the guillotine; this professional debtor who denounces high finance—has he, in truth, any convictions, any principles, any real self at all?

We see him first as President and Secretary of the radical Cordeliers Club, doing the routine work of a 'patriot,' and doing it well; speaking seldom, shortly, and to the point; a Royalist (as his play has shown) until it becomes fashionable to be a Republican; and playing no small rôle in the revolution of August, 1792. To Fabre, who in this is a typical Jacobin, the August Revolution is a demonstration of the solidarity of the country. There is danger that the *départements*, tired of the inefficiency of the Assembly, may start a movement away from the capital, and towards a federal form of government. Paris must appeal for the support of the provinces. Both must unite to reform the Assembly, and to destroy the throne. This

is the burden of Fabre's speech on June 18, which rouses the Sections for the demonstration of the 20th; and he is one of the few revolutionary leaders who, on August 10, actually take part in the attack on the Tuileries, and do not merely talk about it afterwards.

We see him next at the height of his influence, in 1792–3, first as one of Danton's secretaries (the other was Desmoulins), then as deputy to the Convention, and finally as a member of the Committee of Public Safety. His position as secretary to the Minister of Justice gave him, for a few weeks, comparative wealth. Courtois, whose object it was to minimize this source of income, put the total amount he received at 3,000 livres, and said that he increased it by a dishonest deal in army boots, which were contracted for at five livres a pair and sold at eight and a half or nine—and then went to bits after twelve hours' wear on the muddy roads of Champagne. However this may have been, Fabre's position gave him the *entrée* everywhere—Madame Roland complains that he even followed Danton to her house uninvited; and introduced him to company that proved both useful and dangerous. He also gained what was even more risky for such a man—the control of Danton's secret service funds. When, at a later date, Danton's administration of this money came under suspicion, Fabre was accused of having feathered his own nest. It was said to be a mystery—there is always someone jealous enough to say so—where he and his mistress got the money to live in an expensive house, and to keep two carriages. Fabre protested loudly against such attacks. 'They reproach me,' he said, 'with having a smart town-house, and making a display of luxury that puts republican manners to shame. My Louvre (as one should say, My Buckingham Palace) consists of three rooms, with kitchen and offices. That is the fairy castle, that is the glittering palace of Armida that my enemies talk about. It is true that my house is in a fashionable part. But the ornaments that decorate this modest abode are a few pic-

tures painted by my own hand. . . . I defy any upholsterer in Paris to say that he has ever put foot over my threshold. . . . They say that I am a rich man. I would sell all that I have in the world, except my writings, for less than 40,000 francs; and that represents the profit on a number of plays which, thanks to the kindness of the public, have been so successful that one of my comedies had a continuous run of 160 nights. Look up the accounts of theatres all over France, and you will see that the total receipts from all my plays were over 150,000 francs. Only 40,000 are left, and they are fairly mine—the fruit of twenty-five years' observations of human nature, of hard work, persecution, and misery. . . . They say I am luxurious. I have a profound love of all the arts. Beauty pleases me as much as goodness. I paint, I draw, I compose, I carve, I engrave, I write poetry, I have composed seventeen comedies in five years, I have decorated my own rooms—that is the luxury they talk of.' Here Fabre deserves our sympathy; for it was a narrow and ugly temper of the Revolution that could grudge reasonable indulgence to artistic needs. But every touch added to this self-portrait of an æsthete makes it less like that of the austere patriot which adorned the moral fashion-plates of 1794. It would have been happier for Fabre if he had never come to Paris, never made money to indulge his tastes. He put some of his bitterness into the last play that he wrote. 'Paris,' says one of the characters in *Les Précepteurs*:

> . . . mislikes me so: I want a place—
> At once a narrower and a wider space—
> As wide in Nature, and as close as Man.
> Here naught but shams and artifice we scan;
> Here's nothing simple, natural, or true;
> But cruel, cruel is the state I rue.

As a Paris deputy to the Convention, Fabre spoke seldom, but to the point, avoiding sentiment and rhetoric in his speeches as he had avoided them in his plays; and did good work as Secretary of the Committees of Vigilance,

War, Agriculture, and Commerce. Still in Danton's large shadow, he becomes, in 1793, a member of the first Committee of Public Safety, and one of the Jacobin minority which pushes the Girondins out of their political nest. When the struggle between the two parties comes to a head in May, 1793, he backs the petition of the Paris Commune (May 1) for the expulsion of the Girondin deputies; and justifies this interference with the liberty of the House by boldly identifying Paris with the Sovereign People, which alone created the Convention, and alone can reform it. In a long list of charges against the Girondins that which seems to him the most serious, or, at any rate, the most effective, is their attitude towards the common people. 'The people, in your view,' he said, 'are of no use, except to produce commotions when they are needed. Once they have played their part in a revolution they can go back to the gutter: they are good for nothing, and they must let themselves be led by those who know more than they do, and who are willing to take the trouble to lead them.' Whether the Sovereign People would experience any better treatment at the hands of Jacobin than of Girondin masters remained to be seen. The argument was, at any rate, good enough to bring about the Revolution of June, 1793.

Two months later, Fabre, the last man in the world who should have touched such matters, became involved in the financial affairs which, in a little more than six months, brought him to the scaffold.

IV

It must constantly have puzzled students of the Revolution how Danton and his associates could be condemned to death on the political charges brought against them at their trial. There must have been something else, they could not but infer, in the background, some widely

known scandal or disqualification, that made people forget Danton's patriotic services of two years ago, look on unmoved at the destruction of his party, and make no attempt to reinstate him, afterwards, in the Panthéon of public memory. The answer to this problem has only gradually emerged, as historical research has been pushed back behind the vague political accusations, behind the specific charges of corruption brought against Danton himself, to the obscure intrigues of a group of financiers, speculators, and profiteers, who hovered round the outskirts of Danton's party, taking advantage of its political influence, and compromising its moral reputation. The centre of these intrigues, in which all the threads sooner or later became involved, was the affair of the India Company: and there is the more reason for examining this affair because it has recently been made the subject of special study.

The original India Company (Compagnie des Indes) went into liquidation in 1769 as a result of the Seven Years' War. In 1785, during Calonne's ministry, a new India Company was launched under royal patronage with a capital of forty million livres, and soon became prosperous enough to excite the jealousy of merchants who did not enjoy its monopoly of trade east of the Cape. In the second year of the Revolution (March 26–April 3, 1790) this monopoly was attacked in the name of Liberty, and the Constitutent Assembly abolished it in principle; but made no attempt to deal with the Company, which was in fact in a stronger position with a democratic constitution than it had been under Government control. In August, 1792, the 'Rump' of the Legislative Assembly, annoyed at the contrast between rapidly depreciating Assignats and a prosperous Stock Market, decreed, with special reference to the India Company, the registration and taxation of all transferable stock. The Company evaded the tax by calling in all its stock, and substituting a register of holdings; and thus carried on its business in defiance of

the law, but with the connivance of Clavière, the Brissotin Finance Minister, until the fall of the Girondins in June, 1793. As early as May of this year Paris had been placarded with insinuations against the Company. On July 16 it was formally charged by Delaunay in the Convention with evading taxation, cornering supplies, and profiteering. The House first ordered the sealing up of the Company's warehouses at L'Orient, and then the suppression and compulsory liquidation of the whole business. Fabre took a prominent part in these debates, speaking on July 16, August 3, and August 14. In his imaginative mind the quite natural manœuvres of a body of business men to evade a troublesome law, and the easily explained depreciation of the paper currency, became a complicated plot on the part of bankers, financiers, and foreign agents, inspired by Pitt, to depreciate the assignats and destroy the Revolution. 'The old speculators of Necker's time,' he says, 'only aimed at filling their own pockets, and harmed none but financiers and investors; the new speculation is a very different affair: it has turned into a conspiracy against liberty, and against the Republic. The aim of Pitt and his agents in speculation is to lower the exchange, and to raise the prices of food, raw materials, and every kind of commodity. By that means he hopes to make it impossible for us to continue the war, to exhaust our people, and by the mixed effects of extreme dearness and poverty to arm us one against another.' After the experience of the last ten years we shall hardly blame Fabre for misunderstanding the causes and effects of currency inflation. But it can hardly be doubted that his fantastic talk of a foreign plot did much to divert attention from the real causes and remedies of the financial troubles of 1793.

But even under the Terror a man would hardly be guillotined for an error in Political Economy. It was in connection with the India Company that the specific charge was brought that proved fatal to Fabre. A group of speculators saw a chance of making money out of the compul-

sory liquidation of the business. When the decree of July, 1793, was passed, suppressing the Company, its shares fell from 1,500 to 650 livres, and the group bought up as many as they could. All they now had to do was to secure the passing of a second decree more favourable to the Company: its shares would rise again, and they could sell at a profit. Delaunay had been the ringleader of this plot in July, and had proposed the first decree; in October he came forward again and proposed a second, which practically allowed the Company to liquidate itself, without Government control, in its own way. Fabre, it is not denied, opposed this, and carried an amendment by which the liquidation was handed over to the Government: with this amendment, and another by Cambon, the decree was carried. But Delaunay, not to be outdone, altered it in the drafting, so as to defeat the object of the amendments, and got it countersigned, in this falsified form, by Fabre, adding also a statement in his own hand to the effect that it had been signed by the other members of the Committee (which was true only of the original draft, not of its falsified form). So far as its immediate effects went, this decree remained a dead letter. But when, some weeks later, the fraud was discovered, it gave an obvious ground of accusation against Delaunay and Fabre. The document itself has survived, and can be seen, in facsimile, in Professor Mathiez's book on the *Compagnie des Indes*, where it is discussed in detail. Fabre's signature is unmistakable. If he signed without reading the document he was culpably careless; if he knew what he was signing he was guilty of fraud. When the exposure came, and the men incriminated began to accuse one another, it was for some time assumed that he was innocent. In fact, he joined with Hébert and others in denouncing Chabot, who tried to save himself by involving as many people as possible—particularly a group of foreign bankers—in what came to be called the Foreign Conspiracy (*Conspiration de l'étranger*). And when, on November 17, the Governing Committees met and or-

dered the arrest both of the accusers and the accused—Chabot, Basire, Julien de Toulouse, and Delaunay on the one hand, and the bankers De Batz, Benoît, Proly, Dubuisson, Simon, Duruy, and Boyd on the other—neither Fabre nor Danton nor Hébert (who were also implicated) were included. Fabre, foolishly, was not content with this immunity. He tried to strengthen his position by coming forward with a statement in which he staged the Foreign Conspiracy more theatrically than ever. 'This Company,' he wrote, 'tends to disorganize and overturn the National Convention by a system of deformation and corruption; to incite the people, and bring it into a state of complete anarchy by the isolation and multiplication of powers; to turn one authority against another in every town, every section, and every political gathering; to impel the people towards a system of individual sovereignty by an exaggerated patriotism, and (under pretext of public welfare) an exaggerated system of liberty and equality; to preach atheism, and formally destroy the dogma of the immortality of the soul; to create public distress, so as to be able to provide remedies in the form of arbitrary measures or laws worse than the distress itself; to make all the world hate us for our religious immorality and political anarchy, and to accustom the people to recognize no limit and no restraint. It is the aim of this Company that authority shall be depreciated and despised, the laws disregarded, passions fomented, and licence let loose, simply in the interests of the locality, and (before long) of the party, and even the individual; that the results of this general confusion shall be arranged beforehand by the usurpation of power, the creation of an armed force, the preparing of opinion for this move, the placing of agents in all branches of the Government, and the sub-division of the public funds to make them more easily embezzled; that the State may be urged towards dissolution by the Terror, which would help the conspirators by silencing reason and virtue, and giving free rein only to extravagance; that every nation

and every thinking man may be disgusted with a liberty which is anarchy, an equality which is oppression, and a philosophy which is a farce. Its object is to provoke the seizure of private property by an exaggerated and false idea of liberty; and at last to hand over France thus ruined and disorganized to the tyrants who are simply waiting for the results of this last and most terrible conspiracy of all—the one which turns the people against itself.'

One may well ask what is the meaning of all this rhetoric? has it, indeed, any at all? Fabre's receipt for a political plot is like Gilbert's

> receipt for that popular mystery
> Known to the world as a Heavy Dragoon:

He takes all the most lurid and alarming constituents of revolution,

> Melts them all down in a pipkin or crucible,
> Sets them to simmer, and takes off the scum,
> And a 'Foreigners' Plot' is the residuum.

No wonder that he was suspected, as he had been before, of trying to distract attention from his own misdeeds and those of his friends by rhetorical and insincere denunciation of others. No wonder that, when the India Company affair was taken up in earnest as a political issue, and the falsified decree became public property (in Amar's first report, January 13), Fabre found himself in prison. Danton, in the Assembly, dared not oppose the arrest; but, knowing himself menaced, demanded that the prisoners should be given a chance of defending themselves at the bar of the House. When that was refused, he urged that the matter should be ended as soon as possible. But 'to limit the inquiry,' as Billaud remarked, 'was to strangle it: if the report on Fabre's case were hurried through, it would mean losing the fruit of many discoveries; and woe to those (he added) who sat at Fabre's side and may yet be found to have been his dupes!' The threat to Danton, now compromised in the conspiracy, was plain.

The inquiries dragged on for another two months. It was not till March 16 that Amar's second report was presented, in which he recommended that Chabot, Delaunay, Julien, and Fabre, as 'the authors of the conspiracy,' and Basire, as 'their accomplice,' should be brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. But by now this was not enough for the Jacobin Government. Both Billaud and Robespierre protested against treating as a financial scandal what had become a political plot. Robespierre, in particular, takes up Fabre's 'Foreign Conspiracy' and turns it against himself. 'Yes,' he says, 'it must be stated publicly in this House: the crimes of some of our colleagues are inspired from abroad; and the chief result that our foreign enemies hoped for was not the destruction of these individuals, but of the French Republic.' After challenging Pitt and the British Parliament, he goes on, 'Do you know what the difference is between their members of Parliament and ours? It is that their illustrious Parliament is corrupt through and through, whereas we reckon that only a few members of the National Convention are tainted by corruption. It is that their Members of Parliament openly sell their votes to the highest bidder, and boast of it; whilst here, when we discover a traitor or a corrupt man, we send him to the scaffold.' The loud applause which greeted this remark showed that the House knew what was in Robespierre's mind, and wished not to be suspected of any lack of enthusiasm for the policy of the governing committees. For the whole political sky was by now black with what had been, but a few months before, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. When Robespierre made his speech the Hébertists had already been two days in prison. Six days after it they went to the scaffold. A week later the Dantonists were arrested. Within a few days they too were dead.

Fabre in prison wrote a long *Précis apologétique*, in which he tried to exculpate himself with regard to the India Company, and the falsified decree. While it is difficult to accept

his defence, and easier to think that his need of money and love of intrigue led him into crime, it may still be allowed that it was his general reputation rather than any particular act which was the ground of his condemnation. The Government took no great pains to distinguish degrees of guilt among a gang of financiers and politicians whom they considered as a whole to be bringing the Revolution into discredit. The court took the same line. The falsified decree was not even produced at the trial. Fabre was indicted as a Dantonist. That was enough.

Much has been made—and rightly—of the iniquity of the trial, and of the national ingratitude in putting to death one who had done so much service to the country as Danton. But was the verdict unfair? There is one very significant fact. In 1795, a few weeks before its dissolution, and under the full influence of the reaction against Robespierre, the Convention decided to organize a funeral ceremony in honour of those of its members who had fallen victims to the 'decemviral tyranny' of the Terror. A list of forty-eight names was drawn up. It included Desmoulins and Philippeaux of the Dantonists. But it did not include Basire, Chabot, Delaunay, Fabre, or Danton. 'Not a person in the Assembly rose to undertake *their* defence, or to claim that they had been unjustly condemned.'

V

It is pleasanter to turn from the wreck of Fabre's political career to a matter in which his peculiar talents fitted him to do well. In October, 1793, the Convention decided to adopt a new Calendar, beginning the year with September 21—the day on which the monarchy had been abolished—and renaming the days and months on republican principles. Fabre was made reporter of the Committee which carried out this idea: his literary fame, and the skill

with which he had improved his own name, were his qualifications. On October 24 he produced his report. It begins by explaining the reason for a new calendar. 'We could not go on reckoning the years during which we were oppressed by kings as part of our lifetime. Every page of the old calendar was soiled by the prejudices and falsehoods of the throne and the Church. . . . It is necessary to substitute for these visions of ignorance the realities of reason, and for sacerdotal prestige the truth of nature.' Fabre makes a special attack upon the superstitions connected with All Saints' Day, Corpus Christi, and the Rogation Days, all of which he regards as designed by the priests to secure control over the people. 'It was in the pleasant month of May (Fabre is reviving memories of his childhood), at the moment when the rising sun had not yet sucked up the dew and the freshness of the dawn, that the priests, with every accompaniment of superstition and devotion, used to lead credulous populations into the fields; and there, after showing us Nature in all her beauty, after displaying the earth in all its glory, they as good as told us—"It is we, the priests, who have made this countryside green again; we who water these fields with so fair a hope; it is through us that your garners will be filled. Believe in us, respect us, obey us, and make us rich: otherwise hail and thunder, which are at our command, will punish you for your lack of faith, docility, and obedience." And then the labourer, struck by the beauty of the service and the richness of the images, believed, and held his tongue, and obeyed, and easily enough attributed to the imposture of the priests what were really the miracles of nature.' It was to counteract this error—and it must not be forgotten that France was almost entirely an agricultural country—that Fabre's calendar was designed. Every division of the year was to bring home to the people the facts and virtues of what used to be called agriculture, but is now, doubtless more accurately, named rural economy.

The months were prettily and appropriately re-named thus:

30 days beginning	September 22:		Vintagey Month (Vendémiaire).
„	„	October	Misty (Brumaire).
„	„	November	Frosty (Frimaire).
„	„	December	Snowy (Nivose).
„	„	January	Rainy (Pluviose).
„	„	February	Windy (Ventose).
„	„	March	Buddy (Germinal).
„	„	April	Flowery (Floréal).
„	„	May	Meadowy (Prairial).
„	„	June	Harvesty (Messidor).
„	„	July	Sunny (Thermidor).
„	„	August	Fruity (Fructidor).

This nomenclature has the advantage, as Fabre pointed out, that the mere mention of the date calls to mind the season of the year, the temperature, and the state of the vegetation. Perhaps in France the months and seasons are more regular in their habits than they are in this country.

Next come the weeks and days. The months being neatly divided into three *décades* or groups of ten days, instead of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, we now have Primdi (First day), Duodi (Second day), and so on up to Décadi (Tenth day), which is a holiday, taking the place of Sunday. There is certainly an advantage in this arrangement; for you can tell at a glance that the 14th of any month must be a Quartidi, or that Quintidi fortnight must be the 25th.

So far so good. But Fabre is not content with numbering our days: he must name them too; and it is here that his ingenuity, and his desire to be edifying, seem to have run away with his sense of humour. Let him explain himself. 'The priests,' he says, 'had assigned to each day of the year the commemmoration of some pretended saint. This list of names had no method, and no usefulness; it was a catalogue of lies, dupery, and charlatanism. We have come to the conclusion that, after expelling this crowd of saints

from its calendar, the nation ought to put in their places all those things which constitute its real wealth—the worthy objects, not of its cult, but of its culture: the useful products of the ground, the utensils we use in its cultivation, and the domesticated animals, which are doubtless much more precious to the eye of reason than beatified skeletons disinterred from Roman catacombs.' Accordingly, every Quintidi is named after a domestic animal—Horse-day, Donkey-day, Ox-day, Turkey-day, Pig-day, and so on; and each Décadi after an agricultural implement appropriate to the time of year—Plough-day and Roller-day in autumn, Spade-day and Drill-day in winter, Hoe and Fork-days in spring, Sickle and Waterpot-days in summer. It is 'a touching idea' Fabre thinks, that 'the labourer, on his day of repose, will find consecrated in his calendar the name of the instrument he will need the next day.' Not only so: he would find the remaining days named after all manner of fruit, vegetables, trees, and flowers, not to mention natural phenomena and the mineral constituents of the soil. Snowday, Iceday, Honeyday, Waxday, Dogday, Strawday, Petroleumday, Coalday, Resinday, Flailday, would be a typical week ; another would begin with Appleday, Celeryday, Pearday, Beetrootday, Gooseday, Heliotropeday, Figday, and end with the obscurer flora and fauna with which Fabre found it necessary to fill up his list.

When he had thus devised names for every day of the new year Fabre found that he had five days (or, in leap year, six days) left over. These he proposed to treat in a quite original way. They were to be called the 'Sansculottides,' or 'Trouser-days'—for the 'culotte,' or breeches, was, like 'plus-fours,' an aristocratic garment, and the common people wore trousers, as they had done (Fabre maintains) in the time of Cæsar. These days were to form a half-week of festival, to celebrate the end of the year. The first of them, in the list accepted by the Convention, was to be the Feast of Virtue, the second the Feast of Intelli-

gence, the third of Labour, the fourth of Opinion, and the fifth of Rewards. The sixth extra day in leap year will be '*The* Trouser-day,' when Frenchmen 'will come from all parts of the Republic to celebrate liberty and equality, to cement by their embraces the national fraternity, and to swear, in the name of all, on the altar of the country, to live and die as free and brave Trousermen.'

There was one item in this programme in which Fabre exercised once more his incomparable gift for enclosing flies in ointment. Nothing could appear more democratic than the Feast of Opinion—yet he made it almost a threat against democratic government. 'This feast,' he said, 'sets up a new kind of tribunal, whose character is at once gay and terrible. For on this unique and solemn day the law allows every citizen free speech about the character, acts, and personnel of the public service: it gives free scope to the gay and witty imagination of Frenchmen . . . Ballads, allusions, caricatures, pasquinades, the salt of irony, silly sarcasms, shall on this day be the salary of any elected official who has deceived the people or incurred its hatred or dislike. . . . Thus,' he concludes, 'the French people will preserve its sovereign rights: for the Law-courts can be bribed, but public opinion is incorruptible.' True, one need not take too seriously an institution that only comes into being for one day in four years. But it was a tactless reminder to those in authority, entirely characteristic of Fabre's awkward humour, as to who were the real leaders of the Revolution.

VI

It is usual to treat Fabre's finest comedy, *Le Philinte de Molière*, as a political pamphlet, in which the unselfish virtue of Alceste—the ideal patriot of 1790—is contrasted with the cynical egoism of Philinte. But the play may also be interpreted as a confession of Fabre's own character—

of the dualism of which he was conscious in himself, and which, as a dramatist, he was ready enough to exploit, between his better and his worser self. He is the Philinte who says of himself, in the opening lines of the First Act:

> I am easy-going, take men as they come;
> Whate'er they do, I let them, and am dumb.
> 'Tis a mistake, I feel, to aim too high;
> There's use in faults, and good in infamy.

It is to Fabre himself that Alceste says:

> You give the rein, my friend, to every fad,
> And neither love the good, nor hate the bad.

When Alceste denounces Philinte in Act 4, it is Fabre in a repentant mood facing his own faults:

> Your days of pleasure, that so softly flow,
> This sloth that lays you senseless, like a blow,
> This taste for idleness, this chilling wealth
> That gives vain leisure lodging here by stealth;
> Such are the rotten fruit that boredom bears—
> Vile egoism's image, and its heirs.
> Your soul's all pride, and all your wit is vain;
> Real worth you imitate, but never gain;
> Vigour and fire—you've immolated both,
> And sacrificed your honour to your sloth.
> The dupe of rascals, you would lose your fame
> To win your ease, and feel no blush of shame.

Yet Fabre had a better self which he dramatized in Alceste. 'I am blunt and frank,' he writes in one of his letters, 'vivacious to a fault, proud and stand-offish, though at the same time shy. . . . I doubt whether I show any real talent except when I am expressing that genuine feeling, and that hatred of shams, vice, and cruelty, and charlatanism, which are the foundation of my character, temper, and moral principles.' He was not always, or, indeed, often, true to this better self; but it was there. And in the last words of Alceste this self passes a verdict on the Revolu-

tion, which, if it explains the aversion Fabre inspired in austere patriots of the type of Robespierre, also goes some way to atone for his collusion with their crimes. 'Let him reflect (he says of Philinte)

> That all the feelings which, nobly combined,
> Make a man virtuous, honourable, kind,
> Candid and just, a lover and a friend,
> Are nothing, unless pity with them blend?

MARAT

JEAN PAUL MARAT

1742 Born at Boudry, Neuchâtel.

1759 At Bordeaux.
Visits Paris and Holland.

1767–8 Living in London.

1773 *Philosophical Essay on Man.*

1774 *The Chains of Slavery.*

1775 Made M.D. of St. Andrew's.
An Essay on Gleets.

1777–83 Physician to Garde du Corps of Comte d'Artois.

1780 *Plan de législation criminelle.*

1787 Translation of Newton's *Optics.*

1788 *Offrande à la Patrie.*

1789 *L'Ami du Peuple.*

1792 *Journal de la Révolution française.*

1793 *Publiciste de la Révolution française.*
July 13, murdered by Charlotte Corday.

1794 September 21, pantheonization.

1795 February 8, de-pantheonization.

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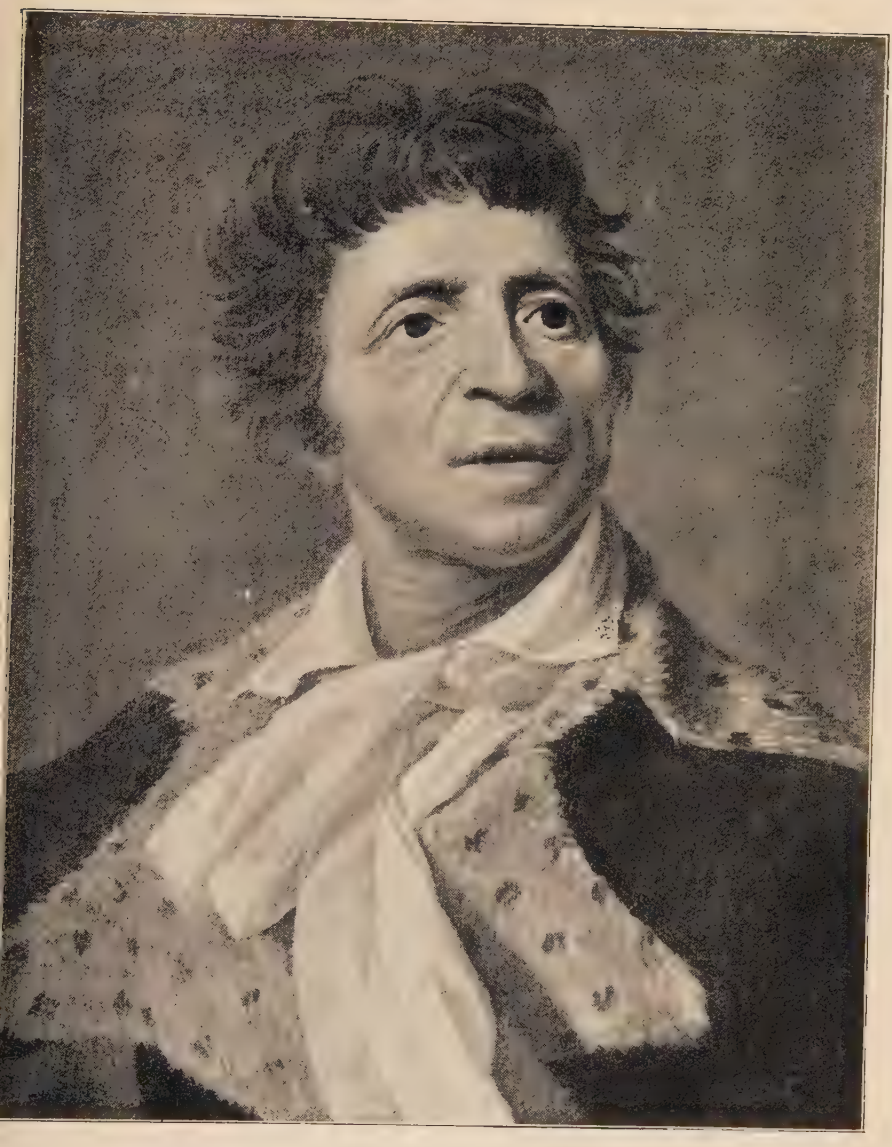

MARAT

from a painting in the Carnavalet Museum

MARAT

I

ONE day, in the middle of the month of April, in the year 1776, a London tradesman received the following letter:

Dover, 11th April, 1776.

A few days before my setting off from London I called on you to settle our account, but did not find you at home. Affairs of great concern call me for a while in the continent. I shall return to London on the beginning of next October, at which time I'll take care of discharging my little bill.

I am your most humble servant,

Dr. Marat.

The tradesman may have been satisfied with so much politeness. But if experience had made him suspicious—and the French colony in London had none too good a reputation in money matters—he no doubt made inquiries. What was known of this Dr. Marat in London? Ten years before, in 1767–8, he had lodged in St. Martin's Lane, and had been one of a number of foreigners who frequented Old Slaughter's Coffee House in that street. He appeared to be a man of a little over thirty, and passed for a physician, studying medical practice in various countries. In political opinion he was a decided Wilkite, 'and was very eager in defending in conversation all opposition to Government.' At the coffee house he came to know the Venetian artist, Antonio Zucchi, who formed 'the highest opinion of his abilities,' and drew on his 'extensive classical reading' for subjects for his pictures. The friendship evidently prospered, for in 1775 we know that Marat was

visiting Zucchi's house 'in the most familiar manner, a knife and fork being laid for him every day,' and that 'he borrowed from Zucchi, at different times, about £500, which he could not repay. He (still) professed himself a physician, and cured Bononi the architect of severe complaints twice or three times. He had an original way of thinking, in his professional capacity, as was observed by the apothecary who made up the medicines, and acted against common rules. He was a little man . . . slender but well made. Of a yellow aspect, he had a quick eye. He had a great deal of motion, seldom keeping his body or limbs still. He was thin, discontented, and abused the establishments which existed.'

Such are the first extant letter and the earliest accounts that we have of Jean Paul Marat. The description of his appearance, and of his medical and political interests, is borne out by other evidence. We know that he was the son of a Spanish-Sardinian father and of a Swiss mother, born at Boudry in Neuchâtel in 1743 (he was therefore under, not over, thirty in 1767–8); that he left home at sixteen, studied medicine at Bordeaux and Paris, and visited several cities in Holland before his appearance in England. We have a long list of books and pamphlets that he wrote on medical, scientific, and philosophical subjects; as well as his *Chains of Slavery*, in which 'the clandestine and villainous attempts of princes to ruin liberty are pointed out, and the dreadful scenes of despotism disclosed.' We know that his medical friends in Edinburgh thought well enough of his learning to recommend him for an honorary degree in medicine at St. Andrew's in 1775—though it may also be remembered that this was the university of which, because of its practice of selling such honours, Dr. Johnson said that it would grow richer by degrees. It would thus appear that when Marat went back to France in 1777 he took with him a considerable reputation as a doctor, a scientific researcher, and a political writer; so that we are not surprised to find him ap-

pointed at once as medical attendant to the bodyguard of the Comte d'Artois, the King's brother.

On the other hand, whilst we have no knowledge of Marat's presence in London after January, 1776, there is a considerable body of evidence identifying him with a certain John Peter Le Maître, or Le Maire, *alias* Mara, who was a tutor in modern languages at Warrington Academy about 1772: who settled in Oxford with "Mrs. Le Maître" as a teacher of French, and of drawing for tambour-work, in 1775: who in February, 1776, robbed the Ashmolean Museum of a number of valuable medals, for which he was arrested at Dublin, tried at Oxford, and sentenced in March 1777 to the hulks at Woolwich: who, nine years later, was teaching in Edinburgh under the name of John White, and was arrested for debts at Newcastle; and who reappeared once more in the debtors' prison at Bristol at the end of 1787.

It may be thought unlikely that the well-known London doctor and author of 1775, whatever the amount of his debts, should become the poor teacher and criminal of 1776–7; or that Marat should have obtained a position in a French royal household immediately after escaping from the hulks at Woolwich. On the other hand there are undoubted gaps in the career of the person whom we may call Marat I, and they coincide rather curiously with the appearances of Marat II. Marat I, with his scientific experiments and publications, must have run through a lot of money: we have seen him sponging on his friends, and flying from his creditors. It is not impossible that he may have fallen back, during low times, on the teaching of French, or drawing for tambour-work. If the date of the Dover letter, April 11, 1776, is correct, it is difficult, no doubt, to reconcile with the career of Marat II, who was at that moment in prison at Dublin. Yet the story of the Oxford robbery is full of circumstances appropriate to the real Marat: and it must be admitted that if he lived a double life, what we know of his existence under

the Revolution accords better with the furtive and disappointed Mr. Hyde of Marat II than with the prosperous and fashionable Dr. Jekyll of Marat I.

In any case it is clear that the Marat who was in Paris a few years before the Revolution enjoyed a great reputation both as a doctor and as a scientist. No doubt, in a society that ran after Mesmer and Cagliostro, he was a bit of a quack. The famous *eau-factice-pulmonique* with which he cured the Marquise de Laubespine of advanced tuberculosis was found, when analysed, 'to be little more than chalk and water.' The coat-of-arms, surmounted by a coronet, which adorned his note-paper, was apparently an imaginary one, based on that of his native town of Geneva. But he was eminent enough as a doctor to be recommended by the Marquis de Choiseul to his friend the Intendant of Tours, and as a scientist to be a candidate for the directorship of the new Academy of Science at Madrid. His experiments in optics and electricity roused the interest of Benjamin Franklin, and were seriously discussed in the scientific papers. We know that Brissot and Barbaroux were among his admirers and pupils. So Marat approaches the Revolution—an ingenious, conceited, cantankerous little man, his pockets swollen with press-cuttings and unpaid bills, and his head full of his great grievance against the French Academy, which will not admit that he knows more about optics than Sir Isaac Newton. And perhaps it was the festering of this grievance into a 'persecution complex' which turned the lively and not unsociable scientist into the sour recluse and cynical 'friend of the people' who from his cellar castigated in turn every phase of the Revolution.

II

In 1788 Marat wrote his first revolutionary pamphlet, and called it *Offrande à la Patrie*; and this was soon followed by others dealing with the Constitution, the Rights

of Man, and the faults of the British system of government. But pamphleteering was a middle-class method, and Marat seems to have wanted, from the first, to get into close touch with the common people. He was to be seen reading aloud from Rousseau's *Contrat Social* at the street-corners. And early in September, 1789, he began to issue the small eight-paged journal which, under the name of *Ami du Peuple* (in September, 1792, *Journal*, and in March, 1793, *Publiciste de la Révolution française*) appeared, with some intervals, almost every day until his death. The motto of this paper under the monarchy was one that Marat had already borrowed from Rousseau—*vitam impendere vero*—'truth or death.' He began it, he says, in 'a severe but honest tone, that of a man who wishes to tell the truth without breaking the conventions of society'; but soon, finding that the deputies and officials whom he censured did not mend their ways, he 'felt that it was necessary to renounce moderation, and to substitute satire and irony for simple censure.' When this too failed, he came to think that nothing would succeed but force, and preached the extermination of all who supported the old *régime*, or opposed the new order of liberty. Marat was gifted with a fatal clairvoyance, unredeemed by any touch of toleration. His doctor's eye diagnosed disease everywhere. He had an unrivalled knowledge of the pathology of politics. He denounced in turn each National Assembly and almost every leader of the people. And as he flattered himself that his scientific discoveries were original and epoch-making, so it became a matter of pride with him to point out treachery where others had never suspected it, and to represent himself as the saviour of the country from unprecedented disasters. Besides, it is demoralizing to anyone to be expected to denounce something or somebody once a day; and Marat's criticisms were often quite irresponsible. Barbaroux—doubtless an enemy—describes an occasion on which he and a friend visited Marat. 'We found the great man writing his journal. He was in a hurry: the

printer was calling for copy. You should have seen the casual way in which he composed his articles. Without knowing anything about some public man, he would ask the first person he met what he thought of him, and write it down. "I'll ruin the rascal," he would say.' Such methods naturally brought Marat many attacks. But the prophet liked being a martyr, and kept up the pose of a hunted man, hiding in attics and cellars, long after any danger of arrest had passed. It increased his prestige, and the circulation of his paper.

Mere denunciation does not make a prophet; and in his constant castigation of error Marat might have lost the power of speaking the truth. He was saved by a more amiable characteristic—a genuine care for the poor. After August, 1792, he chose a new motto for his paper—*Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis*—or 'Let us tax the rich to subsidize the poor.' Marat was never a Communist. He thought equality of property an impracticable ideal. But he believed that society ought to compensate the poor for their loss of natural rights—liberty, equality, and the rest—by a system of public philanthropy that could provide them with work, pay them adequate wages, supply them with cheap food, and look after their sick. His socialism, like Robespierre's, was of the old-fashioned kind that would leave the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate, but would tax the superfluities of the one to relieve the necessities of the other. But though Marat is a 'friend of the people,' and an enemy of all aristocrats, financiers, and profiteers, he has no illusions as to the unfitness of the crowd for liberty or self-government, and is as ready to denounce them as their oppressors. 'O Parisians!' cries this new St. Paul on the Areopagus, 'you frivolous, feeble, and cowardly folk, whose love of novelty is a mania, and whose taste for greatness is a passing fancy; you who have a rage for liberty as though it were a new fashion in clothes; you who have no inspiration, no plan, and no principles; who prefer clever flattery to wise

advice, fail to recognize your true champions, and trust the word of any casual stranger; who surrender to your enemies on their word of honour, and pardon the most perjured traitor on the first whisper of remorse; you whose projects and plans of vengeance are always made upon the spur of the moment; who can always produce an isolated effort, but are incapable of sustained energy; you whose only incentive is vanity, and whom nature might have formed for the highest destinies, if she had only given you judgement and perseverance—must you always be treated as grown-up children?' Marat must have realized before long that the crowd was no more likely to be reformed by abuse than the politicians. But he had made the discovery on which more than one popular preacher has built up a reputation, that the crowd enjoys being abused. He said once, in a moment of frankness, to Basire, 'I put up my price for the public, my friend, because I know that they purchase my wares; but my hand would wither rather than write another word if I really thought that the people were going to do what I tell them to.'

Accordingly it is a mistake to look in Marat's writings, as some of his admirers do, for a system of thought. One idea, and one only, seems to string together the pearls of his invective, and to give to his expression of proletarian class-feeling something of the consistency of a political programme. This is the notion of a dictatorship. He had read in his classics the history of such tyrants as Polycrates of Samos, and Dionysius of Syracuse. He knew that democracy in the Greek cities grew out of tyranny, and tyranny out of proscription, executions, and the spoiling of the propertied classes. He believed that it was by the same road that the Paris people—it was characteristic that he hardly thought of the countryside as part of the problem—would achieve their rights. And this was why, with the clear-headedness of a fanatic, and the callousness of a medical man, he never shrank from proclaiming the last article of his creed—'I believe in the cutting off of

heads.' The fantastic numbers of heads which he is said to have demanded, ranging on various occasions from 500 to 270,000, might give the impression that he was not serious; but this would be to forget that he was an editor, with a shrewd sense of the publicity value of big figures, and not a cold mathematician: that he was not a bloodthirsty man, but a thwarted idealist, whose imagination ran to see vengeances from which his eyes would have turned away. The Marat who organized the massacres of September, 1792, was the same who, a few years before, excused himself, on grounds of sensitiveness, from attending a post-mortem.

How does this central idea of Marat develop during the four and a half years of his political career? It begins, as we have seen, in his clear-sighted conviction that the people whom he loves are unfit to rule, and that they cannot hope for justice from their present rulers. He is one of the first to protest against the attempt to disfranchise the unpropertied classes in the summer of 1790, and the first to realize that the social result of the Revolution has so far been nothing but the substitution of plutocracy for aristocracy: the poor man has gained a new master—that is all; and one whom he will find it more difficult to displace than the old one. 'What shall we have gained,' he asks, 'by destroying the aristocracy of birth if it is replaced by the aristocracy of wealth? It would have been better to have kept the privileged orders, if we are now to groan under the yoke of these *nouveaux riches*.' He appeals to the legislators not to deprive the workers of their political rights. He hints, in a very prophetic passage, at the possibility of the latter enforcing their demands by what we should call a General Strike. 'To put ourselves in your place we have only to stand by with folded arms. When you are reduced to waiting on yourselves, and digging your own ground, you will become our equals. But as you are fewer than we are how will you ever secure the fruit of your toil?' So they had better grant of their free will what

might otherwise be forced from them. The appeal went unheard. The final draft of the Constitution of 1791 stiffened, instead of relaxing, the property qualifications for candidates and electors. Marat had a fresh grievance against the governing class. But it did not alter his conviction that the people were unfit for self-government, and he refused, right down to the establishment of the Republic in September, 1792, to support the Republican party. During the winter of 1791–2 he never moved beyond the idea of a 'very limited monarchy.' 'I don't know,' he writes on February 17, 1791, 'whether the counter-revolutionists will force us to change the form of government, but I am quite sure that a very limited monarchy (*monarchie très limitée*) is what best suits us nowadays. . . . A federal republic would soon degenerate into an oligarchy'; and he describes Louis XVI as 'on the whole the King we want.' Even after August 10 he refuses to move with the crowd, and would rather incur the accusation of supporting Orléans' candidature for the empty throne than risk a Republic. It was only after the decision of September 21 that he re-named his paper *Journal de la Révolution*, and the motto that he now chose for it—the one upon which we have already remarked—was a reminder that he regarded the Republic as an opportunity for social equality, not for political power. 'He cared little,' writes Aulard, 'for what he called metaphysical dreams. Whether as journalist or as deputy he had one clear and fixed idea—that the people, the people that he at once loved and despised, ought to be both free and under control: they must have a guide, a leader, a dictator whom they have chosen, and who is maintained in supreme power by the consent of them all. . . . Marat smiles with pity at the tribune, the Committees, and the debates in the Convention. Let a man be elected, and let him govern.' Was Marat thinking of anyone in particular for this post—of Danton? or of Robespierre? It was dangerous to covet such a position, dangerous even to be thought of as a possible candidate for it; and there

were men who feared Marat's insults less than his favour. But he was really thinking of himself. 'They need only a chief (he says, speaking of the army), a man of head and heart. If the purest sense of civic duty counts for anything at all, I should want a friend of the people (*ami du peuple*) for them'; or 'What prevents their being given a staunch, upright, and incorruptible chief? You do not know where to find him? Must you be told? You know a man who aspires only to the glory of sacrificing himself for the welfare of our country. You have seen him at work a long time.' So Marat hinted, not very obscurely, at himself. He would have been a temporary dictator, kept in power by the people just so long as might be necessary to bring to justice the oppressors of the poor, and to establish a proletarian *régime*. But how, beyond the cutting off of heads, the transition would be worked, or what form the new *régime* would take, Marat does not say, and probably did not know. He left political theory to St. Just, and statesmanship to Robespierre. His own gift was that of prophesy. The 'Day of the Lord' which he foretold, not knowing when or how it should come, was the eighteenth Brumaire; and the 'New Messiah,' whose unconscious forerunner he was, secured justice, and the rights of the poor, by levelling all rights and merging all justice in the dictatorship of the First Empire.

III

Marat, however, kept close to the actual situation, and would have wished to be judged by his actions, not his ideas. One that specially calls for discussion is the part that he played in the Prison Massacres. These massacres arose out of the excited state of Paris opinion during the last days of August and the first days of September, 1792. The capture of the Tuileries on August 10 had not been carried through without some loss of life on the national

side. Instead of thinking of their dead as military casualties, the victors treated them as the victims of a Royalist plot, and demanded vengeance on those of their enemies who had survived the much greater slaughter on the losing side. A special tribunal set up to deal with such persons was working too slowly for popular taste. Only one execution had been carried through by August 21, and Montmorin, the King's minister, had been acquitted. Fresh feeling was roused on the 26th by the public funeral of the 'victims' of August 10. Meanwhile, on the 23rd, bad news had come from the front: the climax of six months' defeat was seen in the capitulation of Longwy, after only one day's siege. On September 2 the fall of Verdun, after an even feebler resistance, brought the enemy a step nearer to Paris. The Government of the city, and almost of the country, was at this moment in the hands of the revolutionary Commune; and its Vigilance Committee, which had charge of the prisons, had been reconstituted, on August 30, in view of the crisis. It at once consulted the Sections as to what should be done with the inmates of the prisons in the event of the invasion reaching Paris. The question need not have been asked, and would not have been answered as it was, unless there had already been talk of lynching the prisoners. Most of the Sections gave no reply; a few demanded the execution of the 'conspirators.' The next two days were significantly spent by the Committee in 'combing out' from the prisons such of their inmates as they wished to save—a process which Marat, who was co-opted on to the Committee on September 2, said that he also adopted after the massacre had actually begun. These ominous preliminaries can hardly have been unknown to the Commune, or to the Assembly, or to the Executive Council of Ministers. Yet at the news of the first massacre of priests at the Abbaye, at 2 p.m. on the 2nd, all these authorities behaved as though in face of a sudden and unmanageable crisis. It was not till 8 in the evening that the Assembly, on a report from the Com-

mune, sent twelve of its members to see what was going on, and to persuade the people to stop the slaughter; when they returned, reporting failure, at 10 p.m., nothing more was done. At 2.30 a.m. on the 3rd another report came from the Commune to the effect that the prisons were now empty, about 400 prisoners having been killed; that they had tried to stop excesses, but that they had not been able to prevent the 'just vengeance of the people' being carried out on 'notorious criminals.' Later the same day came a letter of protest from Roland, Minister of the Interior. But no motion was made until 10 o'clock at night, when it was too late for any action to be taken. Meanwhile the massacre went on. On the first day the murderers visited the Abbaye, on the second the Châtelet and La Force, on the third the Salpetrière, and on the fourth the Bicêtre. The 'conspirators' executed by the 'just vengeance of the people' included the survivors of the Suisses who had defended the Tuileries on August 10, 200 debtors and petty thieves, a number of prostitutes, and the inmates of a reformatory for boys and girls—in all there were some 1,100 victims, of whom a very small proportion could in any conceivable circumstances have become a danger to the city. But this was not all. On September 3 the Vigilance Committee sent out to all the *départements* of France a circular letter in the following terms:

'The Commune of Paris takes the first opportunity of informing its brethren of all the *départements* that some of the fierce conspirators detained in its prisons have been put to death by the people, which regarded this act of justice as indispensable, in order to restrain by intimidation the thousands of traitors hidden within its walls at the moment when it was marching against the enemy. And we do not doubt that the whole nation, after the long sequence of treachery which has brought it to the edge of the abyss, will be anxious to adopt this most necessary method of public security; and that all Frenchmen will exclaim, with the people of Paris, "We are marching

against the foe, but we will not leave these brigands behind us to cut the throats of our children and of our wives." ' The answer to this invitation was a further series of massacres at Versailles, Meaux, Rheims, and other places. It was signed, among others, by Marat, who was certainly privy to the whole plot.

Afterwards, when it was realized how much these massacres discredited the Revolution abroad, everyone hastened to disclaim responsibility for them, and to put it onto his political opponents—everyone, except Marat. He maintained that the massacres were the work of the people as a whole, not of an organized band of murderers, and that no innocent persons perished (both claims seem to be absurd): but on the main point he felt no shame and made no defence. How could he? Why should he? The massacres were so evidently an answer to republican prayer, and a first step towards the democratic paradise. His only regret was that he had not been able in include among the victims some of the more prominent politicians.

It was partly the knowledge of this last circumstance which made Marat such an unpopular figure in the Convention that met a fortnight after the massacres. We have some interesting evidence on this point, as well as several rather hostile accounts of Marat's appearance and opinions, from an English traveller, Dr. Moore, who was in Paris during the autumn of 1792. He hears of Marat first at the end of August as 'a pretended patriot and a real incendiary' whose abusive attacks on deputies are placarded on the walls of the city. He is told that 'this Marat is said to love carnage like a vulture, and to delight in human sacrifices like Moloch, god of the Ammonites.' He describes the speech in which Chabot, one of the lowest of the Montagnards, defended Marat's part in the September massacres when proposing him to the Paris electors. At last he sees him in the House. He 'is a little man of a cadaverous complexion, and a countenance exceedingly expressive of his disposition: to a painter of massacres (he

thinks) Marat's head would be inestimable. Such heads are rare in this country (England), yet they are sometimes to be met with at the Old Bailey.' In October he reports fresh incitements to bloodshed, or defence of it, in Marat's journal, and wonders at the failure of the Convention to proceed against him. 'The man's audacity,' he writes, 'is equal to anything, but what I thought full as wonderful was the degree of patience, and even approbation, with which he was heard. . . . So far from ever having the appearance of fear, or of deference, he seems to me always to contemplate the Assembly from the tribune either with eyes of menace or contempt. He speaks in a hollow, croaking voice, with affected solemnity, which in such a diminutive figure would often produce laughter, were it not suppressed by horror at the character and sentiments of the man.' A few days later 'Marat has carried his calumnies such a length that even the party which he wishes to support seem to be ashamed of him, and he is shunned and apparently detested by everybody else. When he enters the hall of the Assembly he is avoided on all sides, and when he seats himself those near him generally rise and change their places. He stood a considerable time yesterday near the tribune, watching an opportunity to speak. I saw him at one time address himself to Louvet, and in doing so he attempted to lay his hand on Louvet's shoulder, who instantly started back with looks of aversion, as one would do from the touch of a noxious reptile, exclaiming "Ne me touchez pas!"' Marat made no attempt to improve his appearance or commend his company by attention to his person. He wore a handkerchief round his head, and his shirt open at the neck: the untidiness of his whole costume, as one of his friends admits, showed a complete disregard for the conventions of society, if not for the rule of cleanliness. In point of fact he was all the time acting a part—that of a persecuted 'sansculotte,' and dressing for it. When he was a court physician, says Madame Roland, he lived in 'a very nice drawing-room upholstered in blue

and white damask, and decorated with elegantly draped silk curtains, a brilliant chandelier, and superb porcelain vases filled with rare and expensive flowers.' Now he lived as an austere patriot; for the inventory taken of Marat's furniture after his death only mentions '2 wall-cupboards; a book-case, desk, chest of drawers, and dressing-table of inlaid wood; 2 mahogany tables; 2 spheres; a box containing an electric machine; and an iron bedstead'; whilst in the 'printing-room' were 3 presses, and other practical apparatus—there is no suggestion here of luxury, but only of moderate comfort. Simonne Evrard, the woman with whom he lived, and whom he had married according to the rites of Rousseau, was young, well educated, and intelligent; she had devoted her fortune to financing his literary work, and her life to looking after his health. We are often surprised, in studying the Revolution, to find that those who appear in public as violent demagogues, or bloodthirsty monsters, are at home the mildest of men, with the reputation of kind husbands, indulgent fathers, and faithful friends. To many of these men their revolutionary activities were a business which they left behind at the committee room, or at the doors of the House; to a few they were a religion, which they kept for the altar of the country, or for the ministry of the guillotine. If they were savage they were savage officially. They were no more addicted to bloodshed (generally speaking) than is a public executioner. If they acted a part in the public eye, we cannot accuse them hastily of being hypocrites: all officialism and all professionalism, from that of religion downwards, stand in danger of the same judgment.

In Marat's life there was little of this inconsistency, because his appearances at the Convention or at the Club were relatively rare, and most of his work was done at home. This is how he himself describes his daily occupations: 'I only give two hours out of the twenty-four to sleep, and one to meals, dressing, and household affairs. Besides the hours that I consecrate to my duties as a deputy of the

people, I always devote six to listening to the complaints of a crowd of unfortunate and oppressed people who regard me as their defender, to forwarding their claims by means of petitions or memorials, to reading and answering a multitude of letters, to supervising the printing of an important work that I have in the press, to making notes on all the interesting events of the Revolution, and putting my observations on paper, to receiving denunciations, and checking their bona fides, and lastly to editing my paper. That is how I spend my day. I don't think that I can be accused of laziness. I haven't taken a quarter of an hour's recreation for more than three years.'

An account like this suggests that not enough attention has been paid to the medical history of the Revolution. Marat's 'yellow aspect' that we have already observed, and the skin disease that might have saved Charlotte Corday the trouble of killing him; Mirabeau's ruined eyesight; the paleness of St. Just; and Robespierre's 'sea-green' complexion; are they not all symptoms of physical ill-health due to overwork, nervous strain, and lack of sleep and exercise? Do they not go far to explain the atmosphere of personal and party passion in which the early promise of the Revolution was unfulfilled? If governments wish to prevent revolutions they need not waste their money on machine-guns. They have only to provide their people with shorter hours of work and greater opportunities of out-door recreation.

IV

It remains to follow Marat's career in the Convention. Whatever fear or repulsion he may have inspired among his fellow members, and however emphatically his idea of a dictatorship may have been disowned by the politicians who feared to be thought ambitious for the post, Marat's credit with the people remained high, and it only needed another crisis like that of September to enable him to in-

cite the crowd to fresh acts of 'national justice.' The treachery of Dumouriez gave him the opportunity, as President of the Jacobins at the beginning of April, 1793, to lead the attack against the Girondin party. For this, the Girondins unwisely brought him to trial, and he was triumphantly acquitted. He was not the man to forgive his enemies. 'I propose,' he said on May 19, 'that the Convention shall decree complete freedom in the expression of opinion, so that I may send to the scaffold the faction which voted for my impeachment.' It was he who organized and carried through the popular revolt of May 31–June 2, 1793. It was he who climbed the tower of the Hôtel de Ville, on June 1, and rang the tocsin with his own hand. And the vengeance which he began in his life he may be said to have finished by his death; for his murder was taken as evidence of a general plot to assassinate the Jacobins, and it was under this suspicion, three months later, that the Girondin leaders were put to death.

Marat's death had other consequences equally unforeseen by the simple-minded girl who murdered him, and who went to the guillotine with a smile because she had rid the country of its worst oppressor. Instead of a monster whom people shunned, Marat became a martyr whom they worshipped. Plays, poems, and hymns were written in his honour. Children were baptized Brutus-Marat, Sansculotte-Marat, and Marat-le-Montagne. Streets and squares were called after him, and thirty-seven towns in different parts of France assumed his name. Someone forged and printed his farewell letter, with the trembling signature of a dying man. Several journalists paid him the compliment of issuing spurious imitations of his paper. Three small boys of ten to twelve read to their sectional committee a patriotic address, in which occurred the pious words, 'O Marat, quit the Elysian fields, and return to the midst of a people who adore thee!' In some schools children were taught to make the sign of the cross at his name. His bust replaced the statue of the Virgin in the rue des Ours. It

was seriously proposed that his body should be taken in solemn procession round the provinces, so that the whole nation might be able to join in the apotheosis of the great patriot.

The actual ceremonies of the funeral were hardly less remarkable. The artist David, who had staged so many Republican fêtes, was put in charge of the arrangements. 'Marat's burial place,' he announced, 'will have the simplicity that befits an incorruptible republican dying in honourable poverty. It was from underground (in the famous cellar) that he designated to the people its enemies and its friends: there let him rest in his death.' So the sculptor Martin designed a tomb in the form of a cellar, closed by an iron grille, and overhung by huge blocks of stone. Above the opening was an urn containing Marat's heart, and on the turf that covered the stones stood a kind of pyramid, with the inscription, 'Here rests Marat, the People's Friend, assassinated by the enemies of the People.' The whole was overshadowed by the trees of the garden of the Cordeliers Club, in which it was erected. The funeral procession started at 5 o'clock in the evening, and went on till midnight. Young girls dressed in white, and boys carrying branches of cypress, surrounded the bier; behind it followed the Members of the Convention, the Clubs, and the crowd. After the burial each Section defiled before the grave, and every President delivered an oration. Two days later another procession went through the streets, carrying the urn containing the heart of Marat from the Cordeliers garden to the Cordeliers Club, where it was suspended from the ceiling of the meeting-room. And as though this Perpetual Reservation were not enough, one deputation announced that it intended to dedicate an altar to 'the heart of Marat,' and speeches were made comparing Marat to Jesus, with a slight preference for the former, on the ground that he had had the courage to preach against kings.

Even after the fall of Robespierre, when reaction swept

the surviving Terrorists off their feet, Marat's reputation was still great enough to secure him an honour at which he had scoffed in his lifetime—burial in the national Panthéon. On the evening of September 20, 1794, the Marat Section (as the Section Marseillais had been renamed in his honour) carried his body to the vestibule of the Convention. At 8 o'clock next morning all the sections followed the funeral car to the Panthéon, where the body was borne in procession into the temple, to a melody of Méhul's intended to remind all who took part in the ceremony of the happiness of immortality. At the same moment 'the impure remains of the Royalist Mirabeau' were extruded by a side door. The President of the Convention made an oration, and the service ended with an anthem in honour of martyrs and champions of liberty, the words by J. Chénier, and the music by Cherubini.

But Marat's canonization was short-lived. Exactly four months afterwards he was burnt in effigy in the yard of the Jacobin Club, and the ashes thrown down the Montmartre (or, as it was now called, the Montmarat) sewer. His heart disappeared from the Cordeliers. And on February 8, his body, unclaimed by any of his friends, was disinterred again by the Civil Commissary of the Panthéon Section, and buried in the nearest cemetery. Strange that only three heroes of the Revolution—Mirabeau, Lepelletier, and Marat—should have found a place in the national hall of remembrance, and that each should have lost it again! When the Revolution was over, only two bodies remained there, and they were those of men who had not lived to see the events which they did so much to prepare —Voltaire and Rousseau.

V

Though everything was done to obliterate Marat's memory, the legend of him lived on. Or rather, two legends. For to some he remains a monster, with 'a soul

compounded of blood and dirt,' and Charlotte Corday seems a heroine, as noble as she was beautiful; whilst to others he appears as a single-minded philanthropist, and a prophet of modern socialism. In his death, as in his life, he is divided. We are haunted by the Siamese ghost of Marat I and Marat II. Is there any critical operation that can cut them apart, and yet keep them alive?

Napoleon made a sensible remark. 'I like Marat,' he told Gourgaud, 'because he is honest: he always says what he thinks.' If a man really does that, he is likely to give the impression of being two persons, at least, and is perhaps fortunate if he can retain any identity. We purchase consistency at the price of many evasions of the issue, and by accepting many opinions at second-hand. Marat's strength, both for good and bad, lay in his refusal to believe or to do anything at second-hand—to be anything but his own inconsistent self. In the careful and vivid study of Marat by his friend Fabre d'Églantine—it is the best that we have of him—this simplicity is described as the clue to his whole character. 'It characterized alike his person, his thought, his words, and his acts. In everything his insight explained things by their most natural causes; in everything his genius had recourse to the most simple means; that was why he nearly always appeared extravagant to men who were slaves of habit and prejudice, followers of routine, and the real or pretended dupes of the social hypocrisy and duplicity of the present time.' We may add that, as Marat was sincere in a world of hypocrites, so he was courageous in a society of cowards. But simplicity is not enough. It makes fools as well as saints; it turns sincere men into fanatics, and courageous men into criminals. And when it is combined, as it was in Marat, with a strong dramatic instinct and a 'persecution complex,' its results may be quite incalculable.

All that history can hope to do, in any case, is to describe the resulting character. Even that is, with Marat, almost impossible. His speeches and books merely tell us

his opinions; his portraits, for what they are worth, show us his appearance—nothing more; his letters throw practically no light on his real self; contemporary memoirs are often vivid, but seldom intimate or fair. The historian would give up all these sources of information for half an hour's talk with someone who knew Marat.

If he were a hundred years old he might have had such an opportunity. The historian and politician, J. W. Croker, was in Paris in 1837 or 1840, buying from the bookseller Colin, who had been Marat's printer, that great collection of papers and pamphlets which is now in the British Museum. Colin told him that Marat's sister, Albertine, was still living in Paris, and 'she is as like her brother,' he added, 'as one drop of water is like another.' Croker went to see her. 'She was very small,' he says, 'very ugly, very sharp, and a great politician.' Another writer, Esquiros, who saw her about the same time, said, 'The creature before me *was* Marat. In her correct, precise, and vehement vocabulary I recognized all the ideas and even the expressions of her brother. The woman seemed less the sister of Marat than his shade.'

That is as near as we shall ever get to the real Marat.

SAINT JUST

ANTOINE LOUIS LÉON DE RICHEBOURG DE SAINT JUST

1767 August 25, born at Decize, Nivernais.

1777 Father died.

1786 Imprisonment at Paris.

1787 Return to Blérancourt.

1789 *Organt* published.

1790 Civic oath.

1791 *Esprit de la Révolution.*

1792 Member of Convention.

1793 July, Report *v.* Girondins. Member of Committee of Public Safety.
December, Mission to Strasbourg.

1794 January, Mission to Rhine.
February, President of Convention.
April, Report *v.* Dantonists.
May, Mission to Belgium.
July, Defence of Robespierre.
Execution, æt. 27.

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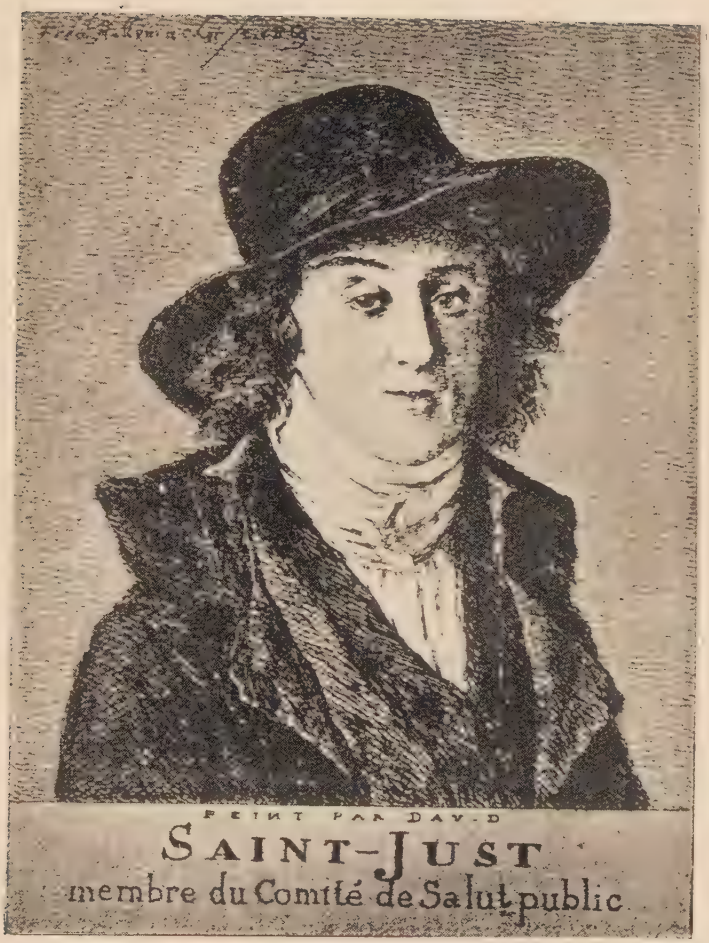

from a painting by David

SAINT JUST

I

ANTOINE LOUIS LÉON DE RICHEBOURG DE SAINT JUST, a handsome young man of nineteen and a half, was sitting in prison. He had just finished writing a long, dull, and indecent poem. He called it *Organt*, and had decided to dedicate it to the Vatican. But he was not proud of it: he had written it to pass the time: and as he read it through it seemed to him the last flourish of his wasted youth. It was with this feeling in his mind that he took up his pen again and wrote for the whole of his Preface, '*J'ai vingt ans; j'ai mal fait; je pourrai faire mieux*'—'I am twenty; I have done badly; but I shall be able to do better.'

He had run away from home—from the house at Blérancourt where his father had died ten years ago, and where he had left his mother and his two small sisters. Not only so; he had carried away with him a silver bowl bearing his mother's monogram, a silver gilt cup that had belonged to her uncle, 3 silver cups, 2 pistols inlaid with gold, several packets of gold stripes from his father's old uniforms, and other family souvenirs of less value, all of which he sold to a Jew in a Paris café for 200 louis; and it was on this charge that he had been arrested, and imprisoned six months in a *Maison de Santé* in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Why had he done it? Hardly for the reason given in his letter home—that he wished to consult a doctor about a disease brought on by overwork, and that he had taken the valuables to pay the doctor's fee. Perhaps because his mother, described as 'a charming and charitable person,' but 'of a sad and resigned disposition,' wanted him to go into the Church, whilst he thought him-

self old enough for his father's profession of the army: when interrogated by the police he said that he was just going to enlist in the Gardes of the Comte d'Artois—that same regiment of which Marat had been the physician four years previously. Whatever the trouble had been, he was now sorry; and when a letter came from his mother asking for his release he returned home and entered a solicitor's office at Soissons. He had done badly: he was going to do better.

It was the Revolution which gave him, as it gave to many others, the opportunity. We hear of him first in 1790 attending a meeting to discuss whether Laon or Soissons ought to be the capital of the new *département* of the Aisne; involved in a difficulty about the local election of judges; and representing his village in a suit for the recovery of some common lands. We see him leading a deputation of rustics to interview a local noble, and striking off the head of a fern with his cane like Tarquin, under the castle windows, as a warning of what may happen to its occupant. We see him at the ceremonial burning of a counter-revolutionary document by the Municipality of Blérancourt, taking the civic oath, and swearing, like Scaevola, with his hand in the flame, rather to die than to be unfaithful to the Nation, the Law, and the King. He is already in touch with Desmoulins, and no doubt with others of his set. And he writes to Robespierre a letter in such flattering terms that that conceited man kept it among his papers, where Courtois found it after his fall. 'You,' he says, 'who sustain the tottering country against the torrent of despotism and intrigue; you whom I recognize as I recognize God, only by his miracles—it is to you that I address myself, to ask you to give me your help in saving my unhappy country. . . . I do not know you, but you are a great man. You are the deputy, not merely of a province, but of humanity and of the Republic.'

Perhaps St. Just counted on his friendship with these revolutionary leaders to secure him a place in the Legis-

lative Assembly: but objections were raised to his candidature on the ground of age—he was still under twenty-five in 1791—by the angry father of a lady whom he had made his mistress, and he found himself excluded. It was in connexion with this same election that St. Just wrote his first political work, under the title of *Esprit de la Révolution et de la Constitution de France*. It has all the arrogance of twenty-four, when one is ready to settle the nature of monarchy, and of the state, the meaning of liberty and equality, and such minor problems as marriage, divorce, and duelling, in 150 pages. If there is a new word in the pamphlet, and one that was to become terribly significant in the later days of the Revolution, it is *vertu*—a rather abstract righteousness masquerading as a religion. 'The early Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians,' says our young author, in his dogmatic way, 'were Christians because they were good and kind, and that is Christianity. Most of those called Christians since the time of Constantine were nothing but savages and madmen. Fanaticism is the work of European priestcraft. A people which has suppressed superstition (he means the French) has made a great step towards liberty. But it must take great care not to alter its moral principles, for they are the basic law of *vertu*.' Virtue was St. Just's point of contact with Robespierre. The latter came to it from his reading of Rousseau, the former from his dislike of religion as he had seen it at the Oratorian School at Soissons. The older man pursued it as the climax of an unsullied manhood, the younger worshipped it in his reaction against the follies of his youth. But both of them, while they thought that they were freeing themselves from religious superstition, remained slaves to its most subtle form—the proselytizing spirit. Not content with being virtuous themselves, they tried to impose a 'reign of virtue' on others, and suffered a not unusual fate of missionaries.

If anyone doubts the fairness of applying religious terms to revolutionary enthusiasm, let him read the letter

which St. Just wrote on the eve of his political life (the date is July 20, 1792) to his friend Daubigny. 'Since I have been here' (at Noyon), he says, 'I have been impelled by a republican fever that devours and eats me up. . . . It is my misfortune that I cannot stay at Paris, for I feel that I have in me the capacity for coming to the front in this age of ours. You are a freedman of glory and liberty: preach it in your Sections, and may the peril of it inflame your soul! Go and see Desmoulins; embrace him for me; tell him that he will never see me again; tell him that I esteem his patriotism, but that I despise himself, because I have read his soul, and know that he fears I may betray him. Tell him not to abandon the good cause, and recommend it to him all the more because he has not as yet the courage that comes from great-hearted virtue. Adieu! I am superior to misfortune. I can put up with everything; but I will speak the truth. You are all cowards, and you have failed to appreciate me. My fame will grow, none the less, and will perhaps put yours in the shade. You wretches! I am a cheat and a rascal, am I, because I have no money to give you? Tear out my heart, and eat it! Then you will become what else you can never be—great! . . . God! that Brutus should languish forgotten, and far from Rome! But I have made up my mind. If Brutus kills no others he will kill himself.'

So much fanaticism, bitterness, and pride were sure to make their mark on the Convention to which St. Just, being now twenty-five, was elected within a few weeks of this letter. We first hear of him at the Jacobins, described in the club Journal as 'a young citizen, a deputy to the Convention, named Sinjeu' (that is a hint as to the pronunciation of his name), whose maiden speech earns the distinction of being printed at the expense of the Club. It is clear that he is from the first a confirmed Robespierrist: unity, efficiency, discipline, virtue, are his watchwords; his bugbear is the Girondin party, and its attack on the predominance of Paris. 'Give life to the laws,' he

cries, 'which destroy anarchy: bear down the factions under the yoke of liberty: scotch all private policies: oppose to the tyrants the faction of all Frenchmen: paralyse the disorder which gets cohesion and credit from unrelated principles: bring to judgement that cruel enemy of the country, whose crime is writ large in the blood of the people (he means the King): and give the people the call to republican virtue.'

Less than a month later St. Just leapt to fame by his first speech in the Convention—almost by a single sentence of it. The point under discussion was whether the King should be tried before the House. It had become a trial of strength between the Mountain and the Gironde. All kinds of legal points were being raised as to the judicial powers of the Convention. The plain facts of the situation seemed in danger of being forgotten. St. Just rose, and put the issue with terrible perspicuity. 'The whole object of the Committee,' he said, 'was to persuade you that the King ought to be judged as a simple citizen: but I tell you that he ought to be judged as an enemy; that, in fact, we are not here to judge him at all, but to resist him; and that . . . the forms of our procedure are to be found, not in the civil law, but in the law of nations. . . . Judge a king as a citizen, indeed! . . . Judging means applying the law. Law involves a common ground of justice. But what common ground of justice is there between humanity and kings? What is there in common between Louis and the French people that we should show any consideration for him after his treachery? . . . Kingship itself is a crime (*On ne peut point regner innocemment*).' It is therefore the right of the Convention, as representing the whole people, to condemn the King to death: and it had better do so quickly; for 'every citizen has the same right over him that Brutus had over Cæsar'; and Louis is himself a murderer —at the Bastille, at Nancy, at the Champ de Mars, at Tournay, at the Tuileries, and therefore deserves no pity and no tears.

St. Just's clear and ruthless mind cut as cleanly as the blade of the guillotine; and the King was dead before he was tried. Later, he made other speeches, marked by the same qualities. Some of them dealt with the theory of Republican Government, or defended the actual Government of the Terror; others consisted of the indictments which he brought, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, against the Girondins and the Dantonists—those terrible introits to the service of St. Guillotine. It will best illustrate St. Just's revolutionary doctrine if we look at each of these groups in turn.

II

The ABC of his constitutional theory can be stated quite shortly. He believes in a strong government: he believes that it should be based on popular election: and he believes that safeguards must be provided against the possibility of its becoming tyrannical.

'Whether you make peace or war,' he says, 'you must have a vigorous government. . . . The French people are active and fit for democracy; but they must not be overtired by public business; they must be ruled without weakness and without violence.' 'I regard it,' he goes on, 'as the fundamental principle of our republic that the representative body should be elected by the people in its corporate capacity. Nobody can represent the people who is not directly elected by it. . . . Whatever other merit a constitution may have, it cannot last long unless the general will has direct control over the making of laws and the choice of the Assembly.' When we ask how this popular will is manifested, he answers dogmatically, 'The national sovereignty resides in the Communes'—parochial assemblies which meet at stated intervals to elect deputies to the Assembly, and without whose consent there can be no change in the Constitution. And, as he has followed Rous-

seau's lead in these two principles, so he borrows from him a third, his distrust of any organ of government, however popular in origin. He would have no permanent President in the National Assembly, no committees, no secret voting; he would deprive the Ministers of any initiative; he would not allow anyone to hold the post of generalissimo; and he would provide for the constant supervision and easy impeachment of all agents of the Government. There exists among Robespierre's papers—those that Courtois omitted from his famous collection—a memorandum in St. Just's writing of a decree to establish a moral and political censorship, almost an inquisition, whose duty it should be to watch and denounce all aristocrats and all agents of the law. 'A revolutionary government can only be maintained either by a tyrant or by an inflexible system of justice and censorship.'

These being St. Just's general views of the kind of government that France needed, we cannot be surprised at his enthusiastic support of the *régime* of the Terror. No sooner was the republican Constitution of 1793 completed than it was put on the shelf. The Convention, inspired by the Committee of Public Safety, declared that the critical state of affairs required the continuance of the provisional revolutionary government until the peace. 'Your Committee,' said St. Just, in introducing this measure, 'has weighed the causes of our public misfortunes, and found them in the weakness with which your decrees are executed, in the wastefulness of the administration, in the lack of a consistent policy, and in the party passions which compete for influence over the government. It has therefore resolved to explain the state of affairs to you, and to submit the measures it thinks best fitted to establish the revolution, to confound federalism, to support and to secure abundance for the people, to strengthen the armies, and to cleanse the state of the conspiracies which are the plague of its life.' Punishment thus becomes an essential part of the programme. Terrorism is the order of the day.

'We make too many laws,' writes St. Just to Robespierre, 'and too few examples. You are only punishing obvious crimes: the crimes of hypocrisy go unpunished. The way to frighten ill-disposed people, and to make them see that the Government has its eye upon everything, is to punish a small offence in each department of public life. . . . Induce the Committee,' he adds, 'to give special publicity to the punishment of faults within the Government.'

This last remark is important, because it is often forgotten that the Terror was mainly directed, not against the people, but against the Government. The Revolution had, in the course of four years, put the whole responsibility for the affairs of the most populous country in Europe upon the shoulders of a class brought up without any political training or experience. Men who had never dealt with more than a few clerks, or employed more than a few dozen workmen, were now administering the affairs of twenty-six millions. They were not only inexperienced; they were also, for the most part, poor men, to whom the temptation to 'make something out of it' must have been very strong; and whose low salaries and insecurity of tenure urged them to lose no time in doing so. Under the Girondin *régime* there had been too little attempt to punish dishonest administrators. To St. Just and Robespierre, with their identification of the Republic with a reign of virtue, it became an object of the first importance. 'Our aim (says St. Just in his Report on the prisoners in February, 1794) is to create an order of things such that everything may tend towards good; that the factions may suddenly find themselves hurried to the scaffold; that a virile energy may turn the national mind towards justice; and that we may secure at home that calm which is necessary to establish the happiness of the people. . . . Our purpose is to set up an honest government, so that the people may be happy, and that, when wisdom and eternal Providence alone preside over the establishment of the Republic, it may no longer be shaken every day by some new crime. Revolutions advance

from weakness to courage, and from crime to virtue.' But though they were idealist in their aims, their methods were realistic; and they saw no more effective way to secure purity and efficiency of administration than by a policy of punishment. It is perhaps a pity that this *régime* has come to be called 'The Terror.' The word suggests a whole population living in fear, and no occasion is lost by picturesque writers of representing Paris as a city of the dead, cowed by the tyrants of the Committee, and silent save for the clatter of the tumbrils and the thud of the falling knife. But, in fact, it is doubtful whether the provisional government of 1793 and 1794 was a heavier tyranny than the government under which France carried through the Great War 120 years later. Its policy was intimidation, but its result was not terror. It was a war government, and therefore punished spies, and those who carried on unauthorized correspondence with foreigners and refugees. It was a national government, and therefore punished aristocrats, royalists, non-juror priests, and other counter-revolutionaries. It was a government of virtue, and therefore punished profiteers, food-hoarders, dishonest or corrupt officials, and treacherous or cowardly generals. In its campaign against these classes it was guilty of many injustices, many cruelties, and many absurdities. Nobody would care to defend its Law of Suspects, by which all crimes were confounded in a vague *incivisme*, and it became a duty to the country to denounce one's neighbour; or the excessive powers given to irresponsible local committees; or the procedure of the Revolutionary Tribunal. But there were not many, in a nation of twenty-five millions, or even in a capital of 700,000, who felt themselves seriously threatened by these measures. The very guillotine, which so lent itself to wholesale executions, was chosen for humanitarian reasons, and to popularize the aristocratic privilege of decapitation. The publicity and heartlessness of its use were largely an inheritance from the old *régime*, when fashionable crowds used to gather to see

bandits broken on the wheel, or regicides torn to bits by red-hot pincers. There is, in fact, little evidence that Paris as a whole was either shocked or frightened by the Terror. It seemed the natural outcome of the Revolution.

Why was this? The answer lies in French history. 'France,' says Lecky, 'was a highly centralized despotism . . . and a great military monarchy. The habits and ideals of military life coloured the whole thought of the nation, and the lines of national character were still further deepened by the unifying, organizing, and intensely intolerant spirit of the Catholic Church. The result of this combination of influences has been that the French political ideal has remained substantially unaltered amid the most violent changes of government. Alike under the despotism of Louis XIV and under the despotism of the Convention it has been the great object of French statesmen to attain a complete unity of type: to expel or subdue all interests, elements, and influences that do not assimilate with the prevailing spirit of the government: to mould in a single die, to concentrate on a single end all the forces of the nation.' In the light of such a policy minorities have few rights in time of peace, and none in time of war. Failure to conform to the type becomes, in face of a national crisis, unpatriotic and seditious, and may be deserving of the only punishment fit for crimes against the country—that is, death. If anyone doubts whether this is the way in which the French argue, let him look at what happened, not only in 1793–4, but also in 1852 and 1871. In 1852, during the *coup d'état* that inaugurated the Second Empire, 32 *départements* of France were under martial law; at least 27,000 arrests were made in Paris, and more than 150 people killed in street fighting. The prisoners were tried by special tribunals, which sat in private, which allowed no witnesses to be heard, and no counsel to be called, and from whose decisions there was no appeal. These courts condemned over 15,000 people, of whom 10,000 were deported to Algeria and Guiana, whilst 84

deputies were also expelled from the country. In 1871, after five weeks' siege of Paris by a French army, and a week's street-fighting, incendiarism, and massacre, in which many public buildings were burnt down, the casualties, admitted to be 6,500, were probably 17,000. When it was over, 13,000 prisoners were condemned to deportation or to hard labour. But why go back even fifty years? Is it generally known what happened in France during the Great War? 'When the catastrophe of 1914 was let loose on the world,' writes M. Mathiez, 'our Republican Government proclaimed *l'état de siège* throughout the whole of France. It gave to courts-martial sovereign jurisdiction not only over military men but also over civilians. Every liberty was suspended, even that of privacy (*domicile*), for in virtue of *l'état de siège* private persons' houses could be searched by day or night. For many months the law-courts ceased to sit at all, and when they resumed work all serious cases were withdrawn from national consideration, to be dealt with behind closed doors by commissions that were often ill-informed. The censorship imposed a tryannical restraint on thought, and was extended not only to papers and books, but also to private correspondence. It is enough to recall this stifling dictatorship, to which a calm and united France was subjected during five long years, in order to be fair to the terrorists of 1793. It is not too much to say that they showed themselves liberal, compared to our modern-day statesmen. They never proclaimed *l'état de siège* without limits: they never organized a preventive censorship: they never handed over civilians to the mercy of courts-martial: they never destroyed the right of free speech in the Convention, or even in the clubs. The Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, of sinister memory, pronounced about 2,500 condemnations up to the ninth Thermidor. There were, alas! in that number too many innocent people; but there was also a great majority of guilty persons, who had really been in communication

with the enemy, and conspired against the Republic. When the history of the war councils and courts-martial that functioned during the great torment which has just ended is better known, more indulgence will perhaps be shown towards the repressions of the Year II. Hardly a week passes without one's being informed of the names of condemned persons who were shot by mistake, and whose memory is rehabilitated by the Court of Appeal. I read recently in a journal (*Le Progrès Civique* for February 14, 1920) that the number of those rehabilitated already stands at 2,700, that is, a total greater than that of the condemnations pronounced by the Revolutionary Tribunal.' One crime does not excuse another: but all are better understood when traced to the same source. And it is clear that both the theory of the Terror, as expounded by St. Just, and the practice of it, as illustrated by the Vigilance Committees and the Revolutionary Tribunal, were nothing unique in French history, but instances of an outlook and a temper which may fairly be called national.

III

Of this revolutionary ideal, as it was understood in 1793–4, St. Just was to many people the perfect embodiment. Like France, he had put behind him his unworthy past: when his mistress followed him to Paris in 1792 he refused to receive her. Like the Revolution, he was young, handsome, self-confident, and austere. Like the Terror, he was reputed to know no pity, and to be ready to hand over his best friend to the guillotine. When Charles Nodier went to see him at Strasbourg in 1794 he was so terrified that 'his heart beat violently, and his legs almost failed under him.' 'He had his back to me,' says Nodier, 'and was admiring himself in the mirror over his mantelpiece, whilst he adjusted with the nicest precision, by the light of two chandeliers, the folds of that high and massive

stock in which his head was held up, as Camille Desmoulins scoffingly remarked, like the Sacred Host in a monstrance. 'St. Just,' he goes on to say, 'was not so handsome as his portraits made out: his chin, emphasized by the stock, was too large; his eyebrows too straight, and almost met when he frowned; his complexion pale and unhealthy; and his fine thoughtful eyes belied by lips that were soft and sensuous. But he was good-looking in a statuesque way. Whilst he folded his cravat he dictated to a secretary, in laconic and almost brutal phrases, orders, decrees, and sentences from which there was no appeal. I fancy I can still hear them (says Nodier) being uttered in the short, sonorous, and vibrant tones of this handsome youth, whom nature had made for love or poetry. I cannot recall without a shudder the constant repetition of the cruel word 'death' with which they all ended, like the sting of a scorpion.' Another contemporary of St. Just speaks of his 'moderate height, healthy physique, strong build, large head, thick hair, bilious colour, small bright eyes (this seems the exact opposite of what Nodier says), disdainful expression, irregular and austere features, strong but restrained voice, generally anxious look, gloomy tone of preoccupation and distrust, and extreme coldness of speech and manner.' One of his portraits represents him in 'a sky-blue coat with gold buttons, fastened right over his breast, and with a very high collar behind,' rivalling the 'huge white stock' which supports his chin. His face has 'the stiffness and intolerant pride of a man who has reformed himself, and is atoning for a youthful error by a life of virtue.'

Here was just the disciple whom Robespierre needed. He enjoyed his admiration, he shared his enthusiasm for virtue, he admired his uncompromising republicanism. He may have learnt from him the symbolism of clothes: certainly there was one great occasion upon which his own wearing of a sky-blue coat (the outward sign, perhaps, of what a famous American psychologist used to call a 'sky-blue soul') was never forgotten. But he learnt much more.

'St. Just owed nothing to Robespierre (says one writer), but Robespierre retempered his soul in the fiery spirit of this young man who, carried within himself the destinies of the Republic. Robespierre had no real eloquence until he had lived in familiarity with that of St. Just.' However this may be, he came to rely upon the younger man's lucid mind and trenchant style whenever one of those terrible Reports had to be made which condemned whole parties in the state to destruction. It was St. Just who, on July 8th, 1793, presented to the Convention the Report that led, three months later, to the execution of the leaders of the Gironde. It is cleverly done, and makes the most of the rather slender charges of anti-Republicanism, federalism, and a plot against the Convention, which were thought sufficient to cover this first massacre of a political minority. It was St. Just again who, on March 31, 1794, put together in a few hours, with the help of some notes by Robespierre, the Report against the Dantonists, on the strength of which they were executed a few days later. This is a terrible document; for it must be remembered that Robespierre, who inspired it, was one of Danton's circle, and manufactured charges against him from private remarks and confidential knowledge; and that St. Just, who wrote it, was occupied in that task of national defence which, two years before, Danton had inaugurated and inspired. It is terribly effective too; for the speaker begins by general remarks about an Orléanist conspiracy, then thickens the atmosphere of suspicion by references to the Girondins and Hébertists, who have already suffered the fate of traitors, and only gradually unmasks, behind Chaumette, Chabot, and other minor villains, the real object of his attack, Danton—Danton, the protégé of Mirabeau, the man really responsible for the massacre of the Champ de Mars, who blew hot and cold before August 10, and was implicated in Fabre's intrigues with the Court, his speculations and federalism; Danton, a man of no party, who attacked Marat, but was indulgent towards the Gironde;

who was the friend of Dumouriez, and gave him an excuse for advancing on Paris; Danton, a hero of the Press, a confidant of the Queen, and a scoffer at sacred things. 'You are a bad citizen,' he ends in the style of a Catiline oration (and Barère records how 'phlegmatically' he recites this incredible theme, holding the MS. in one hand that remains motionless, whilst the other makes but one gesture, inexorable, from which there is no appeal—a motion like that of the knife of the guillotine). 'You are a bad citizen because you conspired: you are a false friend because you spoke ill, two days ago, of Dumouriez, and attributed to him shameful vices—Dumouriez, whom you first used and then destroyed: and you are a bad man, because you compared public opinion to a woman of no reputation (this was one of Robespierre's contributions), because you said that honour was ridiculous, and posthumous glory an absurdity. Such maxims were likely enough to make you friends in the aristocracy; they were worthy of Catiline. If Fabre is innocent, if Orléans and Dumouriez were innocent, then no doubt you are innocent too. I have said enough. You will answer for your crimes.' But when the time came there was no more justice in the trial than in the accusation. And it was St. Just again who deprived the prisoners of their last chance of saving their lives when he induced the Convention to closure the trial. By a strange reversal of the true situation he pictures the Committee, at this moment, as risking its life for the country in attacking a dangerous gang of public enemies. 'Death is of no account,' he cries, 'so long as the Revolution triumphs. That is the day of glory; that is the day for the final establishment of public liberty. Your Committees answer for their heroic vigilance. Who can refuse to respect you at this terrible moment, when you are fighting the last fight against the faction which showed indulgence to your enemies, and which to-day renews its fury in the struggle against freedom?' Mere words: and lying words, full of shameless misrepresentation and self-

deceit. But there was no one to speak the truth, no one who cared for justice: and Danton went the way of Hébert and the Gironde.

There was to have been one more diagnosis, and one more major operation on the body politic, before the patient could be pronounced free from danger, and fit for the promised reign of virtue. St. Just was therefore summoned to Paris for the last time in July, 1794. There were bitter discussions in the Committee of Public Safety; for the malignant growth that had been temporarily stopped by the excision of the Hébertists and Dantonists had now, according to Robespierre, appeared within the Government itself. Committee was against Committee, and every member suspected his neighbour. On the evening of the 8th Thermidor, after Robespierre's speech of denunciation in the Assembly, Billaud and Collot, the two members of the Committee of Public Safety who felt themselves specially threatened, and who had just been expelled from the Jacobin Club, found St. Just in the Committee-room writing his Report for to-morrow's sitting. He refused to show it them. There was some angry talk. At 5 in the morning he went home. At 11 he rose in the House to make his speech, which he had shown to no one; for, as he wrote to the Committee, 'injustice had closed his heart, and he would only open it and open it fully to the National Convention.' It is a moment at which he deserves our admiration. He knows that Robespierre's life is threatened by his enemies on the Committee. Although he is Robespierre's friend he has only to say nothing, and it is likely that his reputation with the army will save him. But he is not that sort of man. His pride, if not his friendship, prevents such a betrayal. He stands up alone to protect Robespierre, and does not even say a word in his own defence. He begins in a conciliatory tone. He is not a party man, and this is not a party question. All the talk of divisions within the governing committees is untrue. But there has been 'a political alteration.' During the absence of

several members of the Committee of Public Safety others have tried to monopolize the power. It is these men whom it is his duty to denounce. He means Collot, Billaud, and their friends. But he is not allowed to go any further. Tallien jumps up. 'Yesterday,' he cries, 'we had one member of the Government making these accusations, and here to-day is another. These constant attacks only aggravate the misfortunes of the country, and plunge it into the abyss. I demand that the whole veil of intrigue shall be torn aside.' 'Hear, hear!' cry a whole crowd of members, rising to their feet—the scene had no doubt been staged beforehand. St. Just refused to give way before the storm that then broke out. He stood at the tribune, says Barras, 'motionless, impassive, unconquerable, coolly defying the whole House,' until the uproar ended in his impeachment and arrest.

He showed the same demeanour during the final scenes in the Town Hall, and at the scaffold, holding his head stiffly and disdainfully to the end. He would illustrate his own portrait of the perfect revolutionist, penned a few weeks before. He would show these false patriots how to die. 'The revolutionist,' he had written, 'is inflexible, but temperate and sensible. He lives simply, without affecting the luxury of false modesty. He is the irreconcilable enemy of every lie, indulgence, and affectation. Since his aim is to see the triumph of the Revolution, he never finds fault with it, but condemns its enemies without involving it in their disgrace. He educates it without ever forcing his views upon it. Jealous for its reputation, he speaks of it carefully and with respect. The equality he claims is not that of legal privilege, but that which he shares with all men, particularly the unfortunate. A revolutionist is the soul of honour. He keeps the law of his own free will, not from lack of enterprise; and because he has peace in his heart. Coarseness he regards as a sign of deceit and remorse, or as hypocrisy masked by violence. Aristocrats may speak and deal with tyrants: the revolutionist has no

truck with bad men. But he is not a fool. He is so jealous for the good name of liberty and of his country that he never acts without consideration. He is eager for battle; he pursues the guilty and defends the innocent; he speaks the truth to instruct, not to compel; he knows that if the Revolution is to triumph he must be as good now as once he was bad: and his morality is not a clever pose, but something heart-felt and fundamental.'

In some notes found among his papers he had written words even more appropriate to his present case: 'Circumstances are difficult only for those who shrink at the thought of death. I pray for death, as for a boon from heaven, rather than that I should be any longer a witness of crimes committed against my country and the human race. Indeed it is a small thing to quit an unhappy existence in which one is condemned to be an idle spectator or an impotent accomplice of crime. . . . I little value the dust of which I am made, and which utters these words: it can be persecuted, it can be put to death: but I defy anyone to rob me of that life of my own, which is laid up for me in heaven, and in the ages to come!'

IV

Looking at St. Just as he stands at the tribune, and remembering Mirabeau's deathbed, Danton at his trial, and Marat in his cellar, we might well think that there was some subtle potion in the atmosphere of Paris which turned common people into the characters of a play—dramatizing the unknown part of a man which comes to light in a moment of crisis; materializing the imaginary figures of ourselves with which we fill the stage of our day-dreams. And, indeed, if we wish to know what these men were like when off their guard, and out of sight of their public, we must follow them away from Paris—to their country homes, on their provincial journeys, or with the army at the front.

St. Just, more than most men, hated the narrow streets of political strife, and loved the open spaces of adventure and war. His happiest times were spent, and his best work was done, during the missions on which he was sent by the Convention, on the advice of the Committee, in December, 1793, and January, 1794.

The first of these missions was to the army of the Rhine. We hear of it from an unusual angle, because St. Just's companion was one Lebas, who had recently married Elizabeth Duplay, the daughter of Robespierre's landlord; and Elizabeth and Henriette (Lebas's sister) were allowed, as a special treat, to go with them. Elizabeth gives an attractive picture of the journey and of St. Just. 'We started at last for Saverne, travelling all four in the same carriage. On the journey St. Just showed me the most delicate attentions, and looked after me like an affectionate brother. At every change of horses he got down to see that everything was all right, for fear of accidents. I suffered so much that he was quite anxious about me. In short, he was so good and attentive to my sister-in-law and myself that the journey did not seem a long one. My beloved (Lebas) was very sensible of all St. Just's kindness, and showed his gratitude. To pass the time, the two men read us extracts from Molière or passages from Rabelais, and sang some Italian airs: they did all they could to distract us, and to make me forget my sufferings.' Arrived at Saverne, the ladies were lodged at the General's quarters, whilst the two Commissioners pressed on to Strasbourg, and busied themselves forming the army of the Sambre and Meuse, recapturing the lines of Wissembourg, relieving Landau, and punishing Schneider, the notorious Terrorist of Alsace. The best account of their mission is in a letter which they wrote to the Popular Society of Strasbourg. 'When we arrived,' they say, 'the army seemed in a state of despair; it had no provisions, no clothes, no discipline, and no commanders. In the city itself there were no police, and the poor people groaned under the yoke of the rich.

. . . The city gates were not shut till late at night. The theatres, brothels, and streets were full of officers, and the countryside was covered with straggling soldiers.' After describing the failure of the local authorities to deal with these disorders, the letter goes on—'We proceeded to banish, in the name of public safety, the constituted authorities; we taxed the rich in order to reduce the price of food; the military tribunal had a number of conspirators shot for wearing white cockades; positions were found where as many as twenty-one sentinels were absent from their posts through the negligence of their battalion commander, who was brought before us by the Commandant of the place; it was discovered that the sentry-boxes on the ramparts were upholstered in material marked with crowns; and, in the city, emigrants, criminals, and federalists who had hitherto lived in complete security, were arrested. We took a number of police measures, as a result of which the people has regained its rights, poverty is relieved, the army is clothed, fed, and reinforced; aristocracy is silenced, and gold and paper money are once more at par.'

From the correspondence and papers that have been preserved in connexion with this mission it is possible to add one or two more details as to the extremely varied duties of the Commissioners. Generals are degraded to the ranks; municipalities are suppressed; aristocrats are required to supply beds and boots for the army; the statues on the walls of the Cathedral are smashed, and a tricolour flag hoisted on the tower; village schools are founded for the teaching of French; military tribunals are allowed to suspend the ordinary procedure of justice in dealing with army contractors and suchlike who fail in their duties, or are in league with the enemy, and to have them shot in the presence of the army. That such drastic measures were often justified cannot be doubted; but there were times when the severity of Moses St. Just had to be tempered by the mercy of Aaron Lebas: Indeed, Choudieu, who

succeeded St. Just as Commissioner with the Northern Army, says that 'trying to do everything, and having no knowledge of military affairs, he committed great errors, giving orders that were outside his competence. Luckily, his mission did not last long, for he was beginning to discourage the best soldiers by an excessive severity, and by refusing, like Draco, to recognize any punishment but death.' But 'he is an excellent man,' Lebas writes home to his Elizabeth; 'I love him and respect him more every day. The Republic has no more ardent or intelligent champion.' And if he was over-severe at times, his *régime* was at any rate preferable to that of people like Baudot, who requisitioned the wine from your cellar; Lacoste, who spent his time in drink or debauchery; or the ex-Capucin Euloge Schneider, who used the threat of the guillotine to secure an aristocrat's daughter in marriage.

V

The most remarkable eulogy of St. Just is that written, late in life, by one of his murderers, Barère. 'If he had lived in the age of the Greek Republics,' he says, 'he would have been a Spartan. His *Fragments* show that he would have chosen the institutions of Lycurgus. He would have lived like Agis or Cleomenes. If he had been born a Roman he would have made revolutions as Marius did, but he would never have been an oppressor like Sulla. He hated the nobility as much as he loved the people. His method of showing his affection doubtless did not suit his country, his age, or his contemporaries; otherwise he would not have perished. But at least he has left on France and on the eighteenth century a deep impression of ability, character, and republicanism. His style was laconic, his character austere, his political principles Puritanical. How then could he hope for success? The distinguishing mark of St. Just's mind is audacity. He was the first to say that the secret of the Revolution is in the word 'dare'; and he

dared. It was he who said, 'The only rest for a revolutionist is in the grave'; and he lay in his own at twenty-seven. He had read much of Tacitus and Montesquieu, those two men of genius who abbreviated everything because there was nothing they did not see. He had learnt from these writers his vivid, concise, and epigrammatic style; his manner, too, had something of their strength, incisiveness, and profundity.'

Twenty years ago there was still living at Blérancourt a great-niece of St. Just, who would show to the visitor a few relics of her 'poor Uncle Anthony.' That was all he was to her. But can history, after all, say anything truer about him? There are a few men who seem to be masters of their destiny, and to out-top their times. They must be described as the public knew them. Their portraits must be painted full-length, in uniform and orders, sword and cocked hat, framed in a foot of gilt, and hung on the line in the big room of history. They have ceased to belong to themselves: they belong to the nation. They have ceased even to be themselves: they have become something else that they thought better. It would be improper for history to represent them in undress, or off their guard. The public would not recognize them: they would hardly know themselves.

But it is not to those pictures that we go even for the best examples of an artist: he has not been able, or has not been allowed, to get behind the conventional figure of his sitter. If we want art, if we want life, if we want the portrayal of character, we are more likely to find it in the 'portrait of an unknown gentleman' that the artist painted for love of his subject, not for cash; or in likenesses of those who were the victims rather than the masters of their destiny. They may have ruined their causes, they may have sacrificed their lives: but they did not lose themselves. We need show them no conventional deference. We can treat them on the only footing that is proper between man and man—one of friendly understanding and fellow-

feeling. And that is the fittest medium of historical portraiture.

Poor Uncle Anthony! 'I have done badly,' he had written; 'but I shall be able to do better.' He had made that the rule of his life. He had sent away his mistress, and forsworn women. He had atoned for the robbery of his home by public incorruptibility. The writer of indecent verse had become the preacher of a virtuous republic. Only, through it all he had kept, as a symbol of his unalterable pride, the smart coat and the high collar. They had been through strange experiences—battles and executions, committees and speeches, cruel attacks and heroic defences, flattery and hatred, success suddenly changed into failure. To leap to fame at twenty-three, and to die in infamy at twenty-seven—that was his career. There was no one with more to give to his country—youth, courage, ability, and enthusiasm: yet there was not one of its instruments that the blind force of the Revolution more contemptuously used, and broke, and flung aside.

ROBESPIERRE

MAXIMILIEN FRANÇOIS MARIE ISIDORE DE ROBESPIERRE

1753 May 6, born at Arras.

1767 Mother dies, father leaves home.

1770 At Louis le Grand, Paris.

1781 Returns to Arras.

1782 Criminal Judge in Arras Diocese.

1785 *Éloge sur Gresset.*

1788 *Adresse à la nation arlésienne.*

1789 *Avis aux habitants de campagne.*
Deputy for Arras to States-General.

1792 February, Public Prosecutor at Paris Tribunal.
Edits *Le Défenseur de la Constitution.*
September, Deputy for Paris to Convention.

1793 July, Member of Committee of Public Safety.

1794 April, fall of Danton.
June, retirement for six weeks.
July 26, last speech.
July 27, proscription.
July 28, guillotined, æt. 36.

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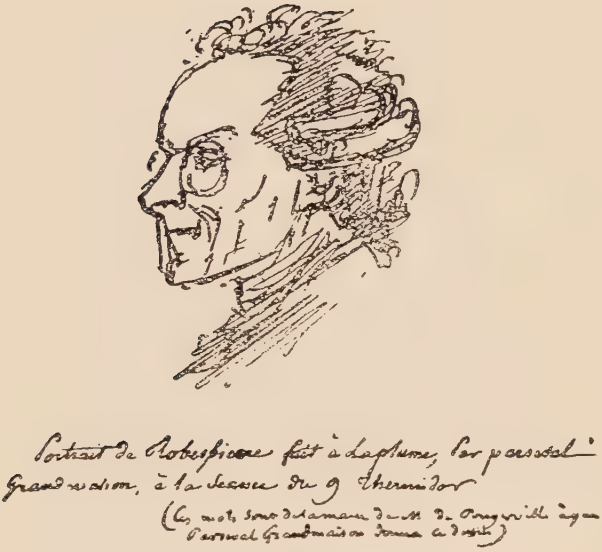

ROBESPIERRE

in the Convention on the 9th Thermidor (July 27, 1794).
from a drawing by Grandmaison

ROBESPIERRE

I

IF any one life embodies the Revolution, it is that of Robespierre. Sieyès's experience was longer, but it was less intense. He knew the whole pattern, of which Robespierre only saw a part; but he had less to do with the making of it. Mirabeau played a larger rôle in the Constituent Assembly; Brissot had more to do with determining the course of affairs in the winter of 1791–2; it was Danton who embodied the national defence, and Marat the national vengeance, during 1792–3; and even the Terror of 1794 found its clearest expression in the flaming stoicism of St. Just. But none of these rivalled Robespierre's intimate knowledge of the Revolution, from first to last, in all its twists and turns: no one had so carefully and devotedly mastered its history, explored its by-ways, treasured up its local gossip, and studied the weaknesses of its inhabitants. No one was so admired by his fellow-citizens, no one so little loved. They listened to him as to the greatest living authority on the Revolution; but they feared him because he knew too much about them and might use his knowledge to their hurt. And as he deliberately identified himself with every phase of the Revolution, so he has the fame that he would have desired: to the popular mind the Revolution means the Terror, and the Terror means Robespierre.

His approach to the great events of 1789 was the commonest—that of the legal profession. Born at Arras on May 6, 1758, into a family of lawyers; left an orphan by the death of his mother and the desertion of his father at the age of seven; educated for twelve years, first in Classics, and then in Law, at the Jesuit College of Louis le

Grand at Paris; he returned to his native town at the age of twenty-two, and carried on the family practice. At school he had been poor, clever, and diligent; had made a few acquaintances rather than friendships—Fréron and Desmoulins were among his contemporaries; had come to respect his Jesuit teachers, so that in later days he never became an anti-clerical; had been chosen on the occasion of a royal visit to the school to deliver an address of welcome to Louis XVI; and had acquired habits of hard work and correct behaviour which moulded his whole life. At home he found himself the guardian and wage-earner for his sister Charlotte, and his brother Augustin, who took up the scholarship that he vacated at Louis le Grand. He set about the business of a provincial lawyer, as he set about everything, methodically and with infinite pains. He was never brilliant; and he was handicapped by a scrupulous conscience and a fondness for first principles—excellent qualities in a philosopher, but obstacles to worldly success. His conscience, it appears, made him give up a good post that his patron the Bishop of Arras had given him in the diocesan court, because its duties involved the passing of the death sentence. And his philosophy nearly lost him cases which his logic and legal knowledge had won: he could not, for instance, advise a priest that a will disinheriting him (unless he joined the reformed church) was null at law without adding: 'Remember that there is no more formidable enemy to liberty than fanaticism.' One case made him almost famous. An eccentric amateur inventor named Vissery had put up a lightning conductor on his house at St. Omer. His neighbours petitioned against this dangerous innovation, and the authorities ordered that it should be taken down. He put up a weathercock instead, and went to law about it. Robespierre was briefed by his friend Buissant to defend the intrepid scientist. Here was a question of principle such as he loved, and a chance to stand as the champion of enlightenment. He won his case, and sent a copy of his speeches to the distinguished

inventor of lightning conductors, Benjamin Franklin, who was then in Paris. In the covering letter he said that he was 'happy to have been of service to his country, and happier still to be able to add to this advantage the honour of obtaining the support of one whose least merit was that of being the most illustrious savant in the universe.' Robespierre's principles did not forbid flattery: his conscience, though it refused bribery, never stood in the way of his career.

In the intervals of legal business Robespierre pursued the art of literature. He was elected a member, and soon secretary, of the Academy of Arras. He divided the first prize offered by the Academy of Metz for an essay on the question whether the families of condemned persons ought to share their legal ostracism. The thirty or so sheets of square blue sermon-paper on which he wrote this essay, in his small, irregular hand with its constant corrections, may still be seen: like everything he composed, it shows clear conviction as to the main outline of what he wants to say, together with an extreme doubt as to the best way of saying it. All his life he hesitated as to ways and means. Another essay, but one that failed to win a prize, was an eulogy of the eighteenth-century poet, Gresset, written for the Academy of Amiens in 1785.

Meanwhile, in his lighter moments, Robespierre wrote trifling or amorous verse for the meetings of a literary society called the 'Rosati,' and composed elaborate epistles, somewhat in the style of Cowper, to his lady friends. There is one thanking a young lady for a gift of tame canaries for his aviary. 'They are very pretty,' he writes, 'and we expected that, as they had been brought up by you, they would also be the gentlest and most sociable canaries in the world. What was our surprise, when we approached their cage, to see them hurl themselves against the bars with an impetuosity that made us fear for their lives! . . . Are these the manners of the doves which are trained by the Graces to draw the car of Venus?

Should not a face like yours have accustomed your canaries to the human countenance? Or can it be that, after seeing you, they cannot bear the sight of others? . . .' And so he trifles on. At another time he makes a sentimental journey to Lens, and while the rest of the party are having luncheon, visits the site of Condé's victory over the Spaniards, and the council chamber of the Town Hall, where 'overwhelmed by religious respect, he falls on his knees in this august temple, and devoutly kisses the seat once pressed by the hinder parts of the great mayor. It was thus,' he adds, 'that Alexander threw himself on the ground at the tomb of Achilles, and that Cæsar rendered homage at the monument which contained the ashes of the conqueror of Asia.' He slept that night at the local pastrycook's, surrounded by the products of his art; and the letter ends with a poem in praise of the inventor of jam tarts: 'thou, whose clever hand, fashioning for the first time the docile pastry, didst present to mortals this delicious dish.'

All this sounds rather silly, and so it is. But it has its place in the portrait of a young man who might otherwise seem inhumanly serious. Anyhow, it was soon to end. In August, 1788, the news reached Arras that the States-General were to meet the following spring. Robespierre at once thought of himself as a candidate; drew up a *cahier* for the local Guild of Cobblers; issued an election address; and duly appeared fifth on the list of deputies elected for Arras, with the note after his name—'this last undertakes to speak for them all.'

II

In the Constituent Assembly Robespierre gradually made himself a name and a career by the same plodding, persistent methods which had served him hitherto. The only way to capture attention in a body of 1,200 people that had no party organization was by making speeches. Here Robespierre's provincial experience did little to help

him. The elaborate, old-fashioned moralizings which were so much admired in the Arras Academy roused laughter in the Assembly. The reporters put him down as 'M. Blank,' or made a point of mis-spelling his name, and only gave a few lines to his speeches. He felt this bitterly, perhaps never forgave it. Injured pride increased his natural aloofness, and made him suspicious and resentful. It was the chief cause of his quarrel with society, which began in political isolation and ended in the Terror. But he was determined to succeed. As he had corrected his manuscripts, again and again, until he found the right expression, so now he studied the taste of the House, and the methods of its favourite orators, and sat up late at night polishing and repolishing his speeches. Before many months they were listened to, reported, and even admired. The secret of his success was not his manner, which was cold, nor his style, which was academic, nor his voice, which was weak and unpleasing, but the uncompromising sincerity of his opinions. 'That man will go far,' Mirabeau said of him; 'he believes what he says.' Whilst other men were trying to find a compromise between principle and practice, he refused to move from the pure doctrine of Rousseau. Whilst other men were wondering whether the Revolution of 1789 had not gone far enough, he was already expressing in the Constituent Assembly of 1790 the ideas of the Convention of 1793. 'They intrigued and agitated,' says Michelet, 'while he remained unmoved. They mingled in everything, experimented, negotiated, and compromised themselves in all kinds of ways; he simply professed his faith. They looked like lawyers, he like a philosopher, or a high priest of truth.... He was for ever bearing witness to principles, but seldom dealt with their application, and hardly ever ventured onto the difficult ground of ways and means. He said what ought to be done, but rarely, very rarely, how one ought to do it.' Nothing is more irritating in an assembly that has practical business in hand than this kind of speaker; and we

cannot be surprised that Robespierre was sometimes listened to with impatience. On the other hand, no attitude is more popular with the general public, which likes to be told that its appointed leaders are men of no principle, and is ready to believe that the problems of government can be solved by any copy-book politician. Robespierre himself soon discovered this, and though he spoke on almost every question that came before the Assembly, the audience to which he addressed himself was not the deputies of France, but the people of Paris. It is their claims that he puts forward, their cause that he champions, their excesses that he defends, day in and day out, both in the House and at the Jacobins, till he forces his enemies to reckon with his unrivalled influence over their new master, the common people. He does not, indeed, stand for the people naturally, as one who cannot help sharing their ideas, and speaking their language: both are foreign to him, and have to be acquired. He does not do it because he loves them as man to man: he is cold in his affections, and his taste is as fastidious as his dress. Marat felt for the crowd more genuinely, Hébert spoke for it more intimately, Danton could rouse its passions with a surer touch. But Robespierre could lead it further than any of them, because he could make common people feel that they were part of a great army, fighting for a glorious cause; because he appealed to their taste for vague and romantic ideals; because he flattered their belief in their innate cleverness and virtue. In a word, his speeches brought Rousseau's cloudy dreams into the workaday world, and turned his philosophical poetry into the prose of a political programme. But that was not all. He was trusted, and had a right to be trusted, for his refusal to make money out of the Revolution. And he attracted, as many selfish and self-centred people do, the loyalty and devotion of men whom he did not love, and whom he was prepared to sacrifice the moment their views came between him and the accomplishment of his designs.

The development of Robespierre's reputation throughout the two and a half years of the Constituent Assembly can be followed either in his speeches or in his correspondence. Of the speeches the most important are perhaps those of February 5, 1791, on Duport's proposed judicial reforms, in which he shows a regard for legal safeguards which he was afterwards to sweep aside in the law of the twenty-second Prairial; that of May 11, 1791, in favour of complete freedom of speech, which seems to ignore the risk of a palace of truth becoming a whispering-gallery for every kind of slander; those of May 16 and 18, 1791, proposing the famous decree by which the members of the Constituent debarred themselves from re-election in the Legislative—a measure that Robespierre put forward on the principle that a democratic assembly should rely upon 'community thinking' rather than upon the individual efforts of political soloists; that of May 31, the same year, opposing capital punishment, on the ground that it increases crime—here again we feel the difference between Robespierre the philosophical democrat and Robespierre the administrator of the Terror; two speeches dealing with the King's flight to Varennes, on June 21 and July 14, 1791, which show that he was very slow to become a Republican; and on August 11, 1791, an eloquent demand for the revocation of the *marc d'argent*, or property qualification disfranchising so large a part of the working classes. What right, he asks, has anyone to treat the poor so? The poor, like the rich, have a stake in the country, and equally look to it for protection. 'My liberty, my life, my right to obtain safety or vengeance for those dear to me, my right to resent oppression and to exercise freely every faculty of my mind and heart—are not all these pleasant boons that nature has imparted to man entrusted, as yours are, to the guardianship of the laws?' Then he carries the attack into the enemy's camp. 'Do you really think that a hard and laborious life produces more vices than luxury, ease, and ambition? have you really less confidence in the

virtue of our labourers and artisans . . . than in that of tax-collectors, courtiers, and the so-called nobility? . . . For my part, I bear witness to all those whom an instinctively noble and sensitive mind has made friends and lovers of equality, that in general there is no justice or goodness like that of the people, so long as they are not irritated by excessive oppression; that they are grateful for the smallest consideration shown to them, for the least good that is done to them, and even for the evil that is left undone; that in the poor, and under an exterior that we should call coarse, are found honest and upright souls, and a good sense and energy that one would seek long and in vain among a class that looks down upon them.' It is hardly surprising that one who could speak thus, and mean it, became popular with the crowd. No longer deputy merely of Arras, he had become deputy for Rousseau, deputy for Paris, deputy for the disfranchised classes, deputy for all those who felt that, somehow, they had gained nothing by the Revolution. Little wonder that, when the Constituent Assembly dissolved itself, at the end of September, 1791, Robespierre, along with Pétion, was crowned and fêted by the Paris mob. No wonder that people flocked to see his portrait, which hung that summer in the Paris Salon, and talked of him as the man of the moment.

What was Robespierre like at this time? Judging from the portraits that have survived, it was not an easy likeness to catch. The only point in which artists and writers of memoirs seem to be agreed is that there was something cat-like about him. 'His face changed,' says Merlin de Thionville, 'so that he had sometimes the restless but amiable glance of the domestic cat, sometimes the wild cat's untamed expression, and sometimes the fierce look of the tiger-cat.' From a number of descriptions—most of them, it must be admitted, written by people who disliked him—we may take a few samples. 'He was a short man,' says Beaulieu, 'with a mean face deeply marked by the smallpox: his voice was sharp and harsh, almost always

pitched in the key of violence, and his agitation was revealed by brusque, and sometimes convulsive movements. His pale, leaden complexion, his gloomy and disingenuous expression, were among many signs he bore of hate and envy.' Thibaudeau says much the same. 'He was of middle height: his face was thin, his expression cold; he had a bilious complexion and a dishonest look; his manners were dry and affected, his tone domineering, his laugh forced and cynical. Though he was the leader of the Sans-culottes, he dressed carefully and kept the custom of powdering his hair after it had quite gone out of fashion.' 'He was five feet two or three inches tall,' says a Thermidorian pamphlet, more exactly; 'he held his body stiffly upright; and walked firmly, quickly, and rather jerkily; he often clenched his hands as though by a kind of contraction of the nerves, and the same movement could be traced in his neck and shoulders, which he moved convulsively to right and left. His clothes were neat and fashionable, and his hair always carefully dressed. There was nothing remarkable about his face, which wore a rather discontented expression; his complexion was livid and bilious, his eyes dull and melancholy; whilst a frequent flickering of his eyelids was perhaps a result of the convulsive movements that I have already mentioned. He always wore tinted glasses. He had learnt how to give artificial softness to a voice that was naturally sharp and harsh, and to make his Artois accent sound attractive; but he never looked an honest man in the face.' It appears that he not only habitually wore the green-tinted glasses mentioned in the last description, but that he also carried, and occasionally put on over them, a pair of large rimmed eye-glasses, when he wished more particularly to look at his audience, with a gesture which inspired them with alarm. Barras says that a member of the Convention who caught Robespierre's eye upon him, just as he was putting his hand to his forehead, hastily withdrew it, saying 'He will suppose I am thinking of something.' 'He advanced slowly to the

tribune,' says one who heard him speak against Hébert at the Jacobin Club. 'Almost the only man at this time to keep up the dress and coiffure customary before the Revolution, his small, thin figure looked just like that of a tailor of the old *régime*. He wore glasses, either because he needed them, or because they served to conceal the movements of his austere and undignified countenance. His delivery was slow, and his phrases so long that every time he paused and pushed his glasses up onto his forehead one might have thought that he had no more to say; but, after looking all round the Hall, he would lower his spectacles again, and add a phrase or two to sentences which were already long enough when he broke them off.'

III

The first thing that Robespierre did after the dissolution of the Assembly in September, 1791, was to pay a visit to Arras, where he was met outside the town by a crowd of citizens, and presented with a civic crown, whilst the houses, even of his enemies and of the aristocrats, were illuminated in his honour. Madame Roland sent him her homage after her return from Paris to the provinces. He had another enthusiastic reception on his return to Paris in November, especially at the Jacobins. He was now the idol of the crowd, and the envy of the politicans, among whom there seemed to be no one, since the death of Mirabeau, to dispute his supremacy.

But his career was to have another set-back. In November the papers secured and published an extract from a private letter that he had written on the subject of the non-juror clergy. As it is often maintained that Robespierre, with his Jesuit up-bringing, was inclined to be too lenient towards the priests, this extract is worth quoting. 'Almost all the orators of the National Assembly,' he writes, 'have inclined towards the Left in the question of

the priests: they have talked rhetorically about toleration and liberty of worship; they have only seen a question of philosophy and religion in what is really one of politics and revolution. They have failed to realize that wherever an aristocrat priest makes a proselyte he turns him into a fresh enemy of the Revolution; for his ignorant victims are incapable of distinguishing the interests of religion from those of the nation; they forget that, whilst appearing to defend his religious opinions, he is all the time preaching despotism and counter-revolution. They fail to see that every religion deserves protection, except that which itself declares war on the rest, and which is only adopted as a weapon against our still insecure freedom. I am forced to suppose that at Paris the state of public feeling on this point, and the power of the priests, is not properly understood.' It shows how strong Catholic opinion still was in 1791, that Robespierre should have got into trouble by expressing such views, which became very general a year later. And if, in the persecutions that followed, he showed any tenderness towards the clergy, it was always 'saving the cause of counter-revolution.' Like his master Rousseau, he valued religion mainly as a bond of citizenship.

But the trouble caused by the publication of this letter was nothing compared to the commotion aroused among Robespierre's friends by his opposition to the popular war policy of Brissot during the winter of 1791–2. He might protest that public controversy was quite consistent with private friendship; he might exchange compliments with Vadier. But Madame Roland grew reproachful, and Pétion wrote that he was so upset by the quarrel between his two friends that he could not sleep at nights. It is clear that the war question was by this time jarring the public nerves, and setting politicians at variance. Robespierre, out of the House, disillusioned as to the competence of the new Assembly, and jealous of the popularity enjoyed by its leaders, staked his whole career on opposition to the war. If he proved to be right, and the war turned out disastrously,

he might win the reputation of a prophet and the reward of a patriot; if he were wrong, he would deserve the fate of a defeatist. He knew how much hung on the issue, and his speech of April 17 in answer to Brissot and Guadet is, in fact, an apologia for his Parliamentary career. He has never, he says, taken a party line; he has always stood alone. The only charge that has ever been brought against him is that of defending too warmly the cause of the people. That charge he is proud to admit. He has learnt in public life 'the great moral and political truth announced by Jean-Jacques (Rousseau), that men are sincerely fond only of those who show them affection; that only the people are good, just, and generous; and that corruption and tyranny are the monopoly of those who held them in disdain.' He is content, if this doctrine finds no favour, to remain in an honourable minority; or even to leave the political field open to the 'academicians and geometricians whom Brissot proposes as our examples,' provided he may retire to the worship of the 'sacred image of Jean-Jacques.' But evidently that is not what he really desires. He goes on in an eloquent and egotistical passage to describe himself as the saviour of the country, and the martyr of liberty. 'Where would you have me retire?' he asks; 'Among what people shall I find liberty established? What despot will offer me an asylum? No! one might abandon one's country in the hour of happiness and triumph; but when it is threatened, when it is torn asunder, when it is oppressed, one cannot do so; one must either save it, or die for it. Heaven, which gave me a soul passionately fond of liberty, and yet ordained that I should be born under the domination of tyrants; Heaven, which prolonged my existence up to the reign of faction and of crime, is perhaps calling me to mark with my blood the road that leads my native land to happiness and freedom. I accept with enthusiasm this sweet and glorious destiny.' But, after all, it would seem that it is not Robespierre's blood which is to be shed. For the speech ends with a denunciation of Narbonne and de

Lessart, the King's advisers. 'See to it,' he cries in a prosaic peroration, 'that the blade of the law moves horizontally, so as to strike off all the heads of the great conspirators; and if you want fresh proofs of their crimes you have only to attend more regularly at our meetings, and I undertake to give them you.' How are we to explain these violent changes of mood? How much of it all is sincere? Robespierre seems to have been honestly convinced that he stood alone in apostolic succession to Rousseau, and was prepared, if necessary, to die for his Orders. But he was equally convinced of the infallibility of his faith, and of the errors of his opponents; and therefore thought it better for the country that they should die first. The one thing that his intensely dogmatic mind cannot grasp is the possibility that both parties may be partly right, and that the country may have need of their co-operation. But in that he was not peculiar. If it had been otherwise the whole history of the Revolution would have taken a different course.

The result of Robespierre's isolation over the war question was that he played a minor part in the events of the summer of 1792. Two of his letters, between July 20 and August 10, describe Paris as drifting towards the 'dénouement of the Constitutional drama.' But the attack on the Tuileries was organized by the lesser men of the republican clubs. It was Danton, not Robespierre, who represented the people in the provisional Ministry of August 11. It was only in view of the *fait accompli* of August 10 that Robespierre's paper, *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*, became at all republican. But from that moment he courted the all-powerful Commune; backed its protest to the Assembly on September 1; kept silent during the massacre of the prisoners from the 2nd to the 6th; and was elected first of the Paris deputies to the Convention on the 7th. The threats against the lives of Brissot and Roland during the massacre, and the rejection of the Brissotin candidates, Pétion and Priestley, at the polls, show to

what an extent the 'August Revolution' had become a movement of Paris against the provinces, and a contest between the Mountain and the Gironde.

As soon as the Convention met, this was seen to be the only issue. Robespierre was too heavily engaged in the fight to find much time for correspondence—at any rate, we have only four of his letters between September, 1792, and June, 1793; but a series of letters from his brother Augustin to their friend Buissart shows how the fight is going—the breakdown of the coalition that had brought about the King's death, a Girondin conspiracy to outjacobin the Jacobins (March 6), Dumouriez's plot, and the arrest of Orléans (April 10), divisions within the Assembly (April 22), and finally the Revolution of May 31 (June 1). Augustin's style is in general more violent than his brother's, but his sentiments are the same; so that the letter of June 1 may be read as a kind of manifesto by Robespierre at the moment of the fall of the Gironde. 'Yesterday,' it says, 'the tocsin sounded, the drums beat, and all the citizens flew to arms. A moral insurrection was made, with the majesty of a great people which is worthy of liberty, and which wills the salvation of the Republic. Once more the enemies of this immortal city aim at slandering it, and at insulting the great-hearted Republicans who have demanded that the Convention shall at last secure the safety of the country by giving up the traitors who dishonour it. . . . If, during the last four years, we have withstood the enemies of freedom, it was because all Frenchmen knew what Paris wanted, and were convinced that it deserved the national confidence by its love for the general good. . . . The crisis is serious, but the people of Paris are united; nothing can divide them; and they are resolved to uphold liberty and equality at the cost of their lives.'

So it might be put, so it might honestly seem, at the moment; but anyone who followed Robespierre's speeches during the months since the fall of the throne—his de-

fence, against Louvet (November 5), of the illegalities of the Commune; his statement, at the time of the King's trial, of the thesis that the people's safety overrules the forms of justice (December 3); his refusal of a referendum, because it would allow a voice to the Opposition (December 28); his proposal (April 24) to limit the right of property in the interests of the poor; or his theory that anarchy, the vice of democracy, is less harmful than tyranny, the vice of oligarchy—anyone who reflected on these sentiments could not fail to see that, in face of the Girondins, Robespierre was rapidly shedding his old liberalism; and that, whilst keeping his respectability of dress, speech, religion, and private life, he was, in fact, becoming the preacher of a terrorist *régime*, and of a dictatorship of the people. This was what he meant when he jotted down in his private notebook the phrase which Courtois post-dated, and twisted into an avowal of personal dictatorship—'*Il faut une volonté une*': not 'the will of one,' but 'one will,' and that the will of the people.

IV

Up to this point in his career Robespierre had always been in opposition. Now, with the removal of the Girondins, he found himself for the first time in power. He had shown that he could criticize: would he be able to construct? No one had a firmer hold on republican principles: would he be able to turn them into practice? He had inspired the people in the time of their weakness: would he be able to restrain them in the day of their power?

As to his intentions there could be no mistake. He expressed them quite clearly in his Report of February 5, 1794, 'on the principles of political morality that ought to guide the Convention'—one of the most remarkable confessions of faith that was ever made by a responsible statesman. 'What,' he asks, 'is our aim? The quiet enjoy-

ment of liberty and equality; the reign of that eternal justice whose laws are written, not on marble or stone, but in the heart of every man, even in that of the slave who forgets and of the tyrant who denies them. We desire an order of things in which all base and cruel passions are enchained, and all beneficent and generous passions awakened by the laws; in which ambition may become the desire to merit glory and to serve the fatherland; in which there are no distinctions but such as arise on a basis of equality; in which the citizen obeys the magistrate, the magistrate the people, and the people the rule of justice; in which the country guarantees the well-being of every individual, and every individual is proud to share in the prosperity and glory of the country; in which every soul grows greater by the constant communication of republican sentiments, and by the need of meriting the esteem of a great people; in which liberty is adorned by the arts which it ennobles, and commerce is the source of public wealth, not merely the monstrous growth of a few private fortunes. We want to substitute, in our country, morality for egoism, honesty for ambition, principles for conventions, duties for convenience, the empire of reason for the tyranny of fashion, the dread of vice for the dread of misfortune; we want to put pride in the place of insolence, great-heartedness in place of vanity, the love of glory in place of the love of gold; we want to replace 'good company' by good people, intrigue by merit, wit by genius, brilliance by truth, the dullness of pleasure by the charm of happiness; for the pettiness of the so-called great we would substitute the grandeur of humanity, for a kindly, frivolous, and unhappy people, one that is happy, powerful, and magnanimous; and for the vices and follies of monarchy we would substitute the virtues and miracles of a republican government. In a word, we wish to fulfil the vows of nature, to accomplish the destinies of humanity, to keep the promises of philosophy, and to absolve providence from its long reign of tyranny and crime. May France, once notorious

for its slavery, now eclipse the glory of all the free peoples of history, and become the model of the nations, the terror of the oppressors, the consolation of the oppressed, the ornament of the universe; and may we, whilst we seal our work with our blood, see at least the first rays of the dawn of universal felicity. That is our ambition: that is our aim.'

How is it to be secured? By a democracy based on public virtue—the first true democracy that the world has ever seen. By a government that trusts the natural goodness of the people, and enforces a high standard of public service. 'If the basis of popular government in time of peace is virtue, its basis in time of revolution is virtue and terror—virtue, without which terror is disastrous, and terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror (he explains) is merely prompt, severe, and inflexible justice. It is therefore an emanation of virtue—it does not spring from a source of its own, but results from the application of democracy to the most pressing needs of the nation.' This is, frankly, a defence of the new tyranny, of the 'despotism of liberty,' which is to declare war on the old tyranny, the despotism of slavery. The war will be carried on, we are told, on two fronts, which are really the same, against the enemies of the Revolution at home and abroad. And at home 'the internal enemies of the French people are divided into two factions, like two army corps. They march by different routes, and under flags of different colours, but they march to the same rendezvous, and that is the disorganization of the popular government, the ruin of the Convention, and the triumph of tyranny. One of these factions urges us to weakness, the other to excess. One would turn liberty into a Bacchante, the other into a prostitute.' (Here Robespierre is already envisaging the Hébertist and Dantonist parties, which were to be destroyed within the next two months.) Only a constant watchfulness on the part of the Government, and the ruthless punishment of counter-revolution, wherever it shows itself, can save the State—'virtue, without which

terror is disastrous, and terror, without which virtue is powerless.' That is his refrain.

How far was Robespierre in a position to carry out this programme? There were, during the Terror, four instruments of government—the Convention, the Committees, the Representatives on Mission, and the Revolutionary Tribunal. In the Convention Robespierre was no more than twenty-fifth in the order of deputies elected President, and only sixth after the fall of the Girondins, when his own party came into power. He was at no time in a position to dictate a policy; though his personal prestige, and ability as a parliamentary tactician, as well as the knowledge that he was the spokesman of the all-powerful Committee of Public Safety, might make the House unwilling to vote against him. Of the two Committees of Government, that of General Security, charged with police functions, and sitting with that of Public Safety for critical decisions, such as the arrest of the Dantonists, was on the whole opposed to Robespierre, and contributed to his fall. On the Committee of Public Safety, which was the supreme authority in almost every other matter in the State, Robespierre's responsibility was shared with the other members, and so was his power. According to Carnot's account of the Committee, which has perhaps been too generally credited, Robespierre, St. Just, Couthon, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois formed the 'political' side of the Committee, and were more particularly concerned with the administration of the Terror, whilst the rest—notably Carnot himself, Lindet, and Prieur—busied themselves with the work of national defence. But this is to make too absolute a distinction between Terror and Virtue. We have only to look at the contents of the notebook which was found among Robespierre's papers, and in which he jotted down memoranda for the meetings of the Committee, to see that there was hardly any department of government in which he did not have some share. On the other hand, there are not many traces of his work

in the papers of the Committee—a few decrees, mostly on police matters, drafted in his hand, and a few, dealing with naval affairs, or with matters of general policy, signed with his name. His function seems to have been to explain and to defend, in the Convention and at the Jacobins, the policy of the Government. He was chosen for this because of his public prestige, and his ability as a political educator. Aulard would seem to go hardly far enough when he calls him a 'minister without portfolio,' but a little too far when he compares him to a modern Prime Minister. For there is really no evidence that he directed the general policy of the Committee, or even that he took the chair at its meetings. Because he was its spokesman in the House he came to be regarded as the author of the Terror. Because he interpreted the wishes of the dictatorial Committee it was easy to represent him as a dictator. But it was a joint policy, and a joint responsibility. As to the Representatives on Mission and the Revolutionary Tribunal, Robespierre's responsibility was again the same as that of his colleagues; and it is to be noticed that the executions showed no falling off during the last weeks, when he was absent from the Committee. On the other hand he cannot be absolved from a principal share in promoting the notorious Law of the twenty-second Prairial, nor (to take one instance) from allowing personal vengeance to influence the execution of Cécile Renault, the girl who was supposed to have had a design on his life. If, then, we ask how Robespierre could hope to achieve his ideal of a republic of virtue, the answer seems to be that he could only do so by persuading his colleagues in the Government to support it. And we shall find that it was precisely his failure to do this which resulted in his threats of further proscriptions within the Committee, and in the determination of those who felt themselves threatened to get rid of him.

But though Robespierre was never a dictator, it would be rash to say that he never wanted to be one. He was not the kind of thinker who forgets himself in the contempla-

tion of truth, or the kind of patriot who thinks the world well lost, so long as his cause is won. He was an intensely self-interested man. He made his own life the embodiment of his creed of virtue. He thought that every picture of the ideal republic was improved by a portrait of himself in the foreground. He polished himself as assiduously as he polished his speeches.

This attitude was the easier, as he lived in an atmosphere of private flattery. Since the alarm of July 17, 1791, he had lodged with a certain Duplay, a carpenter and builder, in the rue St. Honoré. The family consisted of Duplay's wife and four daughters—Eleanor, Sophia (who married in 1791), Victoria, and Elizabeth, who became the wife of Lebas in 1793. The whole household was devoted to Robespierre, and understood that some day he might marry Eleanor. Whether Robespierre himself understood their friendship in this sense is not so certain. Louis Philippe told Croker that the only time when he met Robespierre at dinner he 'said not a word, and . . . looked . . . like a cat lapping vinegar; and when Pétion, who was also there,' rallied him for being so taciturn and *farouche*, and said they must find him a wife to make him sociable; he 'opened his mouth for the first and last time with a kind of scream—*Je ne me marierai jamais!*' He was too much in love with himself to marry. In the Duplay's house he occupied two small rooms overlooking an inner courtyard and a neighbouring Nunnery garden. His study, says Barbaroux, with a spice of exaggeration, was 'a pretty boudoir in which his own likeness was repeated in every form, and by every art—in paintings on the right-hand wall, in engravings on the left; his bust at one end of the room, and his bas-relief at the other; not to mention half a dozen small engravings of his portrait on the tables.' Here he sat, when he was not out at the Assembly or the Jacobins, working at his letters and speeches. He seldom dined out, preferring quiet evenings at home—oranges and preserved fruit after dinner; perhaps a little music, with Lebas playing the violin, and

Buonarotti at the piano. Sometimes he would read aloud from Racine or Corneille; occasionally there was a visit to the theatre; or a Sunday excursion into the country, with the Duplay family and his dog 'Brount.' Few friends visited the house—Nicholas, a printer, and Arthur, a paper-maker; St. Just, when he was in Paris; Couthon the cripple, in his invalid chair; and occasional callers on matters of business, carefully watched by the household. A blameless atmosphere, no doubt, but a very self-centred one, in which Robespierrism flourished with artificial vigour; a state of life good, perhaps, for an abstract thinker, who has only to explore his own mind; but bad for a statesman, who has to understand and interpret the thoughts of others. 'It is perhaps to his change of lodgings,' says Fréron, 'that one ought to attribute the growth of Robespierre's ambition. As long as he stayed at Humbert's he was accessible to patriots, and to his friends. But once he had gone to live at the Duplays he became gradually invisible. They shut him out from society, they worshipped him, they intoxicated him, and they exalted his pride to the point of perdition.'

Nor were the Duplays the only flatterers. Robespierre's postbag often contained letters from admirers of both sexes (one that survives is an offer of marriage by a young widow of Nantes), or appeals for help from people caught in the toils of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Robespierre liked to be told of his virtues, and to feel his power; but he thought no better of those who played upon his weakness. There exists, among his papers, a letter of congratulation from the actors of the Théâtre de l'Égalité on the occasion of his escape from assassination in May, 1794. He kept the letter, but he wrote in the margin the word 'Flatterers.'

V

Many different accounts have been given both of the causes and of the circumstances of Robespierre's fall. To

some it seems the proper retribution for a bloodthirsty tyrant, to others the martyrdom of one whose only crime was that he wished to put an end to the Terror. Between these extremes lie various estimates of the quarrel within the Government, and of the balance of parties in the Convention, which made the events of Thermidor possible. The best way to understand the situation is to close the history books, and to read two of Robespierre's own speeches—those of May 7 and July 26, 1794.

The first of these is the famous 'Report on the relations between religious and moral ideas and republican principles,' by which Robespierre introduced his proposals for the 'Religion of the Supreme Being.' It had always been his way to philosophize the Revolution—not to be content with accepting it as a fact, but to attempt to justify it as part of the eternal order of things, discovered and revealed by reason. He now comes forward as the prophet of the last and greatest revelation—that of republican religion. 'The moral world,' he begins, 'much more than the physical world, seems to be full of puzzles and paradoxes. Nature, for instance, tells us that man is born for liberty, yet the experience of centuries shows us man enslaved.' Nevertheless, there has been real progress. 'In the physical order everything has changed: everything ought to change in the moral and political order likewise. Half of the world-revolution has been accomplished: the other half remains to be done.' And it can be done if the art of government will rise to its high destiny—that art which 'has hitherto been the art of cheating and corrupting men, but which ought to be that of enlightening and improving them.' Looking back over the course of the Revolution, Robespierre sees first a rapid and (as the sequel has shown) premature transition 'from the rule of crime to the rule of virtue'; then a dangerous struggle with a series of conspiracies against the position thus won—a struggle in which Lafayette, Dumouriez, Brissot, Hébert, and Danton have each in turn been overthrown; and now a last

fight to be engaged against the last enemy that shall be destroyed, whose name is Atheism. For this he would enrol the people under a banner with a double device—'God, and the immortality of the soul.' For those are salutary beliefs, necessary for the good of the country, and of humanity. 'Who has commissioned you,' he asks, in an eloquent passage, 'to announce to the people that there is nothing divine? . . . How does it help a man if you persuade him that blind force presides over his destiny, and strikes, at random, now virtue, and now crime? or that his soul is no more than a thin vapour that is dissipated at the mouth of the tomb? Will the idea of his annihilation inspire him with purer and higher sentiments than that of his immortality? Will it give him more respect for himself and his fellow-men, more devotion to his country, a braver face against tyranny, or a deeper disdain either for pleasure or for death?' No, he decides, such ideas never did and never can inspire noble deeds; therefore they must be false, and their opposites must be true. 'In the eyes of the legislator, everything that is useful to the world and good in practice is true.' 'I cannot see,' he says, 'how nature can have suggested to man fictions that were more useful than realities: but even if the existence of God and the immortality of the soul were no more than dreams, they would still be the finest creation of the human mind.' Rousseau, then, is the true prophet, and his religion will save the Revolution. 'You fanatics,' he cries, 'have nothing to hope from us. To recall men to the worship of the Supreme Being is to deal fanaticism a mortal blow. All follies fall to the ground before reason; all fictions fade away in the light of truth. Without compulsion, and without persecution, all sects are to be merged in the universal religion of virtue.' And with the sects will also go sacerdotalism. 'Nature is the priest of the Supreme Being; his temple is the universe; his worship is virtue; his feasts are the happiness of a great people assembled under his eyes to renew the pleasant ties of universal brotherhood, and to present

the homage of sensitive and pure hearts.' The conclusion of the whole matter is that the Convention shall declare that 'The French people recognizes the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul,' and shall sanction a scheme for a state-supported religion on this basis.

If that had been all, if Robespierre had been content to let himself be regarded as the high priest of this new religion, his political opponents would have sneered (as they did), the country would have been bored (as it was), and the Supreme Being might in time have shared the fate of other expressions of republican religion. But that was not all. Robespierre's listeners had not forgotten the passage in which he identified Atheism with Danton, Hébert, and the Girondins. They knew that the new religion had not only a high priest, but also a Grand Inquisitor, and that his name, too, was Robespierre. They were faced not merely with the prospect of a Puritan *régime*, and compulsory church-going—in itself a sufficiently dreary outlook—but also with the dread of fresh proscriptions, aimed at those members of the congregation who failed to provide themselves with the necessary wedding garment. Robespierre, in the peroration of his speech, had once more hinted at the danger of his own death, and spoke of his readiness to face it. That, they knew by experience, was a sure sign that he was preparing death for others.

So matters came suddenly to an issue. When Robespierre came to make his last speech, on the 8th Thermidor, he knew that his life was now really threatened by a coalition between his opponents—by members of the Committee of General Security, who resented interference in police matters by the Committee of Public Safety; by Vadier and the anti-clericals, who had been using the Théot case to discredit the new religious policy; by Fouché, who had been implicated in Chaumette's anti-Catholic propaganda; by Carnot, who had quarrelled with St. Just; by Collot and Billaud, whom Robespierre had already turned out of the

Jacobin Club; by Tallien, whose mistress was in danger of the guillotine; and by a party in the Convention headed by Barras, Merlin, and Courtois. He may also have known (he should at least have guessed) that his six weeks' absence from public life, like Danton's retirement a year previously, had weakened his hold on the House, whilst the continuance of the Terror (after the victory of Fleurus had taken away the last excuse of public danger), and the failure of the Government to meet the economic demands of the mob, had undermined his popularity. Under these circumstances we should not be surprised if Robespierre had taken a conciliatory line, and made concessions to the Opposition, in order to remain in power: and one cannot help admiring the courage with which he reaffirms his policy, and challenges his fate. He has not been, he maintains, and never will be, a dictator. 'The very word Dictatorship abuses liberty, vilifies the Government, destroys the Republic, degrades the revolutionary institutions, renders national justice odious, . . . and concentrates on one point all the hatred and plots of fanaticism and aristocracy.' But he has been, and will always remain, the champion of a Republic of religion and virtue. He has attacked, and he will continue to attack, those who disgrace this national ideal. 'I know but two parties,' he declares, 'that of the good citizens, and that of the bad. Patriotism is not a party matter, but a matter of the heart. It does not consist in insolence, or in a transitory violence that respects neither principles, nor prudence, nor morality; still less in devotion to the interests of a faction. . . . My feeling is that, wherever one meets a man of goodwill, one should take his hand and press him to one's heart.' 'There do exist,' he goes on, in what is perhaps the most eloquent passage he ever wrote, 'pure and sensitive souls. There does exist a tender but imperious and irresistible passion, which is at once the torment and the delight of magnanimous minds—a profound horror of tyranny, a compassionate zeal for the oppressed, a sacred love of one's

country, and a love of humanity that is still more holy and sublime, and without which a great revolution is no more than the destruction of a lesser crime by a greater. There does exist a generous ambition to found on earth the first republic in the world—an egoism of enlightened men which finds divine pleasure in the quiet of a pure conscience, and in the ravishing spectacle of public happiness. You can feel it, this moment, burning in your hearts: I can feel it in my own.' But this high mood does not last. Or rather, it seems inseparable, in Robespierre's mind, from the mood of punishment. The priest becomes once more the inquisitor. Hébert and Danton have been destroyed; but Hébertism and Dantonism are reappearing in the attacks made on the new religious policy, in the talk of indulgence—that is, of ending the Terror before its work is done, and in the failings of the governmental machine. The removal of the recognized factions has only unmasked, behind them, a crowd of hitherto unrecognized traitors and conspirators. 'What then are we to do? Our duty. What have you to say against a man who is willing to speak the truth, and to die for it? Let me say, then, that there does exist (and he uses the same phrase as in the passage about patriotism) a conspiracy against public liberty; that it owes its strength to a criminal coalition intriguing within the heart of the Convention; that this coalition has accomplices in the Committee of General Security, and in its sub-committees that they control; that the enemies of the Republic have set this committee in opposition to the Committee of Public Safety, so as to constitute two governments in place of one; that certain members of the latter committee are privy to this plot; and that the object of the coalition so formed is to destroy the patriots and the country. What is the remedy for this evil? It is to punish the traitors; to appoint fresh members on to the sub-committees of the Committee of General Security; to weed out this committee, and to subordinate it to the Committee of Public Safety; to weed out

also the Committee of Public Safety; to establish a single control under the supreme authority of the National Convention, its centre and referee; and thus to crush all factions under the weight of national authority, and to build on their ruins the power of justice and freedom.'

It is sometimes said that Robespierre made a fatal mistake in not giving the names of those at whom this speech was aimed. But nothing could have made the threat more deliberate or dangerous. The one word 'weed out' (*épurer*) was enough. Every one knew whose names would figure on the next list sent to Fouquier-Tinville. The 'conspirators' had barely time in which to save themselves: but fear gave them energy. Twenty-four hours later Robespierre was in custody: in a little over forty-eight hours he was dead.

Had he counted on the support of the moderate party in the Convention? It turned against him. Had he calculated on imprisonment and a public trial, to end, like Marat's, in a triumphant acquittal? His own friends rescued him from prison, and gave the Convention an opportunity of declaring him an outlaw. Had he hoped that the Sections would rise in his defence? We know that many of them sat all night, wavering between the claims of the Convention and of the Commune, and that most of them refused to rise. There still exists—and it is perhaps the most poignant of all the documents of the Revolution—the appeal which Robespierre made at the last moment for the support of his own Section. Here it is:

Commune of Paris,
Executive Committee.

9th Thermidor.

Courage, patriots of the Section of the Pikes! Liberty is triumphant! Already those whose firmness is feared by the traitors are at liberty. Everywhere the people is showing itself worthy of its character. The rendezvous is at the Town Hall, where the brave Henriot will carry out the orders of the Executive Committee that has been formed to save the country.

Louvet, Payan, Lerebous, Legrand, Ro——

There Robespierre's meticulous signature breaks off, and the paper is spotted with blood. He was spared the knowledge that his own Section would not support him; that 'the brave Henriot' was drunk, and that his men would not wait in the rain; and that his own friends were slinking away from the Town Hall, leaving him at the rendezvous almost alone. The soldiers of the Convention suddenly invaded the room; Robespierre drew a pistol and shot himself in the mouth. From about 3 to 10 a.m. he lay almost dead on the table at which he had signed the death-warrants for Hébert and Danton; from 11 to 4 he was imprisoned among his own victims at the Conciergerie; at 4 they carried him through the streets, where the crowd that should have rescued him stared and cheered; and by 7 his head had fallen at the guillotine.

VI

In a flash of self-knowledge, at the end of his last speech, Robespierre had said of himself, 'I was made to oppose crime, not to control it.' That was exactly true. It was why he was always so formidable in opposition, and such a failure in Government. The same qualities which made him the Prophet of the Constituent Assembly and the Preacher of the Jacobin Club made him also the Inquisitor of the Convention and of the Governing Committees. The greatest spokesman of the Revolution, he could put its thoughts into words, but never its words into action. A vain, ambitious man, conscious of his intellectual and professional ability, but also of his physical and social handicaps, he was always shy, suspicious, and jealous, and could never cultivate a thick skin. Sieyès could always fall back on his philosophy, Mirabeau on his knowledge of the world, Brissot on his enthusiasm for a cause; Danton had reserves of naturalness, Marat of dramatic impersonation, and St. Just of sheer youth. But Robespierre, the most

reserved of them all, had least in reserve: he could never let himself go, could never be natural, could never trust himself to life: he must always be on the watch—whether over himself, for a wrongly turned sentence, or an error in republican deportment, or over others, for those moral weaknesses which he could not forgive, because he had never felt their strength. Perhaps a lack of virility, perhaps a clerical up-bringing, had given his Rousseauism a Puritanical twist. He had virtues and vices as neatly catalogued as a confessor's manual. He saw all life like a chess board, in black and white squares, and no neutral colours. With too few friends, and too many admirers, he had nothing to correct his excess of logic or his defect of humour. He could, indeed, read men's minds, but he could not judge their characters; so he could make them think what he thought, but could not make them do what he wanted. Faced, as every preacher of a difficult creed is faced, sooner or later, by the problem of unbelief, he was too small-minded to forgive, and yet powerful enough to punish. But punishment is a measure of despair. It may cause conformity; it cannot produce conviction. And, in adopting punishment, Robespierre was taking up a weapon which he neither knew how to use nor how to throw away. So he failed and fell—the victim of men who had no convictions, and who were in most respects worse than himself: such at least was Napoleon's opinion, who knew them well. Certainly with Robespierre's death the Revolution loses almost its last trace of moral dignity or political idealism.

'As to the charge of ambition,' says Choudieu, in a very just estimate of Robespiere, 'I do not think it has ever been proved: during his whole political career I regarded him simply as a Republican who was perhaps too austere, but whose one desire was that liberty should triumph.' One of his few friends wrote, many years later: 'I would have given my life to save Robespierre, whom I loved like a brother. No one knows better than I do how sincere,

disinterested, and absolute was his devotion to the Republic. He has become the scapegoat of the revolutionists; but he was the best man of them all. . . . It is fifty years since he died; but I still treasure in my heart the memory of him, and the lively affection which he inspired.'

DUMOURIEZ

CHARLES FRANÇOIS DU PÉRIER DU MOURIER

1739 Born at Cambrai.
1757 Service in Seven Years' War.
1764 Italy and Corsica.
1765–8 Spain and Portugal.
1768–9 Corsica.
1770 Poland.
1773 The Bastille.
1774 Marriage.
1778 Cherbourg.
1790 Belgium.
1792 March, Foreign Minister.
June, War Minister.
September, Valmy.
November, Jemmappes.
1793 March, Neerwinden.
April, Desertion.
1803 England.
1822 Died at Henley, æt. 83.

AUTHORITIES:

Dumouriez, *Mémoires*, and other publications.
Chuquet, *Dumouriez.*

Dumouriez

from a contemporary painting in the Vinck Collection

DUMOURIEZ

I

ALL Dumouriez's history is written in his lively, clever, provocative, and rather Irish face. Here, one would say, is a man full of activity, and full of ideas, who will get every value out of life, and perhaps cheat fate of a little more than his due; a man who will exploit the utmost possibilities of any situation in which he finds himself, and never feel that his presence is unnecessary, or his advice unrequired; a pushing, vain, unrestful person, but brave, able, and attractive, too—in a word, a man made for revolutions.

Charles François Du Périer du Mourier (as his name should properly be spelt) had been born nearly at the turning point of the eighteenth century, and was already fifty when the Revolution began. He was a Walloon of Cambrai, but his ancestors had noble rank, and Provençal blood ran in his veins. The family profession was the army. Dumouriez's father and six uncles had all served together in the same Picardy regiment; and though the boy was intended for the Bar, it was almost inevitable that he should become a soldier. That he was fit for the life was due to no care of his parents, but to the devotion of his sister's music-master, a singer at the Cathedral, who took charge of him from six and a half to nine and a half, after his mother's death, and turned him from a rickety infant, who had to go about in irons and a wheeled chair, into a healthy child, capable of any fatigue. His father, 'brave, noble, generous, and a man of austere integrity'—so his son describes him—lost by stiffness of manners the promotion his talents deserved, and grumbled through a middle-age of disappointed ambition. But he was a schol-

arly man, as well as something of a painter, musician, and poet; and he gave the boy a good education, teaching him enough Latin to enter Louis le Grand at Paris, sacrificing a quarter of his income to support him there, and, when he left school, at the age of fourteen, instructing him in English, Italian, Spanish, Greek, mathematics, history, and politics, besides procuring him a tutor in German. Only the arts were excluded from a purely utilitarian scheme of education; and the boy was never allowed to learn anything by heart, for his father held the view that to develop the memory was to stunt the imagination. Dumouriez soon became a rapacious reader, and made adventures for himself out of his biographies and books of travel. A course of Jesuit history at school had nearly turned him into a foreign missionary, when his father diverted his attention to Plutarch and Montaigne, Pascal, Bayle, and Voltaire. After studying these authors he declared with the anti-clerical fervour of fifteen that he would be 'anything his father liked, except a monk.'

The choice of a profession was settled for him at the age of seventeen by the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. But he remained all his life a student as well as a soldier. 'He collected a small library which always followed him to the wars—the Bible, the *Essays* of Montaigne, Horace, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Montecuculli, the Duc de Rohan's *Perfect Captain*, Feuquière's *Mémoires*, and the *Geometry* of le Blond. He read and re-read these works, as well as any others he could procure, in various languages.' On one occasion his life was saved by a copy of the *Provincial Letters*, which intercepted a bullet aimed at his heart—a miracle, as a Jesuit friend generously allowed, that might be laid to the credit of the Port Royal. But wherever he went, and in whatever company he found himself, young Dumouriez was a picker-up of learning's crumbs. If he was staying with his uncle at Versailles he would find his way to the hunting-school, and bribe the

teachers to give him lessons in riding and fencing along with the King's pages; or he would gather information in his uncle's office as to the internal administration of the country. If he was at the front he studied every detail of army organization. He learnt generalship from Fischer, who 'had better talents and wider views than many of his superior officers'; and diplomacy from Favier, 'the cleverest politician in Europe.' He studied the tactics of the battlefield in friendly rivalry with Guibert, the flattered author of *Tactique*, and those of the boudoir, which were hardly less necessary for military success in the eighteenth century, with Mlle Legrand, the friend of the Du Barry. He was thus rapidly qualifying for the part of the 'perfect captain,' when the Seven Years' War came to an end, and he was discharged, at the age of twenty-four, with 'twenty-two wounds, an empty decoration (so he describes the Cross of St. Louis, which many an older man would have been proud to win), a certificate for a gratuity (which was never honoured) of 600 livres,' and a bundle of unpaid bills.

He did not improve his worldly prospects at this juncture by falling in love with his pretty cousin, Marguerite de Broissy. Both parents showed violent objection to the courtship. Dumouriez, easily despondent, and always in a hurry, first took a dose of opium, and then countered it with another of lamp-oil. The loss of his lady, and the death about the same time of his best friend, young Bullioud, made life seem very melancholy—'his father's house a prison, and Paris a desert.' He determined to travel, and to put his sword at the disposal of anyone who would employ him. He was not far from the plight of the gentleman in the *Ingoldsby Legends:*

> When a man is like me, sans six sous, sans souci,
> A bankrupt in purse, and in character worse,
> With a shocking bad hat, and his credit at zero,
> What on earth can he hope to become—but a Hero?

II

During the next ten years Dumouriez is seldom in his own country. Italy, Corsica, Flanders, Spain, Portugal, and Poland are the scenes in which he plays, in a variety of costumes, the part of a military adventurer.

We see him first 'on the road to Italy, travelling alone, often on foot, and by all sorts of vehicles, and recovering his cheerfulness, his courage, and his confidence,' his imagination agreeably employed with great schemes, and his notebooks bulging with the results of his observations. 'Oh happy age! (he cries) when all is smiles, and everything is beautiful! when, even in moments of opposition and ill-luck, physical vigour and freshness of mind forbid any but sweet hopes, and grand and courageous ideas!' At Genoa he talks, sings, versifies, and enjoys 'the frivolities of conversation and the etiquette of Italian gallantry.' At Rome he visits the antiquities. Drawn to Leghorn by the prospect of fighting in Corsica, he offers his services indifferently and successively to the Genoese against Paoli, to Paoli against the Genoese, and to Costa of Castellana against both Genoa and Paoli. A short and painful experience of war convinces him that the Corsican rebels are no better than 'Canadian savages,' and run away at the first shot. When he returns to the island a few years later it is with a French army, in order to conquer the country for Louis XV; which is done just soon enough to enable the infant son of one of the rebel leaders, Napoleon Buonaparte, to be born on French soil. But, before this, Dumouriez is tramping the roads from Paris to the Flemish frontier, and putting up at the village inns, with nothing in the world but 'a military unform, a greatcoat, eight shirts, a few handkerchiefs, a few pairs of silk stockings, and a copy of Horace.' He is rescuing a beautiful Spanish girl from her cruel brother, and sailing with him from Ostend to Cadiz and Seville; he is passing in the

best society at Madrid as a friend of the Marquis d'Ossun, the French ambassador, or collecting at Lisbon materials for an essay on Portugal; whilst his leisure is devoted to giving lessons in love and geography to the daughter of the King of Spain's French architect, Mlle Marquet.

It was from this pleasant life that Dumouriez was recalled by Choiseul in 1767, to take part in the Corsican campaign of the next two years. This campaign was not a success; and, looking back on the event twenty-five years later, Dumouriez condemned the policy which prompted it. The Corsicans are no longer 'Canadian savages,' but 'religious, hospitable, generous, and proud; they have the germs of all the great virtues; they deserve to be happy'; and his old enemy Paoli is the only man who can make them so. The Genoese had no right to sell the island, and France ought not to have bought it; nor was its conquest worth so great an expenditure of money and of men. Evidently Dumouriez's active mind had not missed the lesson of Corsican patriotism. Lafayette learnt liberty by fighting for it in America. Dumouriez learnt it, no less effectively, by fighting against it in 'France's Other Island,' the Ireland of the Mediterranean.

Dumouriez's next adventure brought him from the circumference to the centre of international politics. In 1770 he was entrusted by Choiseul with a mission in Poland. By long diplomatic tradition, and by the marriage of Louis XV to a Polish princess, France had acquired interests in Poland which were threatened by the increasingly obvious intention of Prussia and Russia to partition that unhappy country. Polish resistance to dismemberment was taking the characteristic form of a Confederation, or armed rising of nobles. Choiseul's intention was to back up this or any other patriotic forces that might be available, to incite Turkey against Russia, to engage Saxony on the same side by the hope of recovering the Polish throne, and to rouse a patriotic revolt in Sweden, whose partition was likely enough, otherwise, to follow that of Poland. He

was not afraid of war—it might strengthen his own position at court; but he could give no effective military help in Central Europe. Dumouriez was therefore given *carte blanche*, and as much money as he wanted; but for the rest he was left to extemporize.

He quickly mastered the available information about Poland, as he had done about Spain and Portugal: bought all the books and maps he could find in Paris, got Choiseul to provide him, at government cost, with Rizzi-Zannani's expensive atlas, borrowed many volumes from the King's library, went through all the dispatches of the French agents in Poland for the last six years, consulted Favier, Chauvelin, and the Comte de Broglie, who was in charge of the King's 'secret policy' in Poland; and after three months' labour summed up his researches in a Memorandum of 100 pages, which pronounced in favour of Choiseul's policy of unifying all the elements of patriotic defence in Poland. But it was not till he reached the scene of action that Dumouriez realized how difficult it would be to carry out this plan. He was embarrassed, from Vienna onwards, by the company of two Polish deputies in national dress, with whom he could only converse in Latin—in fact, the whole compaign had to be conducted in a dead language. He found the acts of the Confederation of Lithuania disputed on grounds of illegality by other Confederations equally loud in their protestations of patriotism. The Conte de Pac, the military commander of the Lithuanians, was 'a man of pleasure, as frivolous as he was amiable'; the Comte Zamoiski, though 'simple and honest,' was 'an impotent old man'; Prince Radziwill could only be described as 'a brutal beast.' The Polish nobles as a whole lived like Asiatics rather than Europeans. 'They spent their whole time in astonishing luxury, mad extravagance, heavy dinners that lasted half the day, gambling, and dancing.' The patriot army numbered sixteen or seventeen thousand men, under eight or ten independent leaders, who so little agreed, and so easily distrusted each other, that they some-

times came to blows, and at best demoralized one another's troops. Their cavalry, entirely composed of nobles of equal rank, had no discipline, never obeyed orders, was ill-armed, ill-mounted, and quite unable to stand up to the Russian regular army—it was, indeed, distinctly inferior to the Cossack Irregulars. There was not a fort, not a gun, not a single foot-soldier on the side of the patriots. With such troops, and such commanders, it would have been difficult enough to do anything, even if the strongest Russian army had not been under the command of the able and afterwards famous Suvorof. Nevertheless, Dumouriez believed that he would have been able to save the situation if his mission had not been brought to an end, in December, 1770, by the fall of Choiseul. He left Poland so sure of the fate in store for the country that he was able to mark on a map the outlines of the coming partition. He wrote in 1794 that he believed the people transferred by the first and second partitions were happier under foreign rule, and that only a strong national effort could prevent the total disappearance of the country. Whether that was a prospect to welcome or to deplore, only Providence could tell.

Returning to France, Dumouriez found himself involved in his patron Choiseul's fall, and, after an abortive mission to Sweden, was thrown into the Bastille. It was probably the best place in which he could be. While his enemies forgot him, he was more the guest than the prisoner of the Governor, who supplied him with lemonade, wine, and coffee, and sent him every day a dish from his own table. He spent his time in the best room in what was ironically called 'Liberty Tower,' reading mathematics and history, books of morality and travel; and 'brought to perfection the art of living alone.'

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether he thoroughly enjoyed solitude. At any rate, within a short time of being released from prison, he hurried into a quixotic marriage with the cousin whom he had courted twelve years before,

and whom he rediscovered, no longer young or pretty, in a convent at Bayeux. It was a disastrous experiment. The lady soon became middle-aged and querulous, and dismissed 120 servants in fifteen years. Dumouriez had reinterred himself in a prison worse than the Bastille. Welcoming any escape, he accepted various employments between 1775 and 1778. When France entered into the American War against England he found himself in command of the port and garrison of Cherbourg. His ingenious mind was at once engaged in composing a memorandum on the Cotentin, and in working out schemes for the capture of the Channel Islands, or the invasion of the Isle of Wight. But he was not attended to, or his schemes were included and compromised in official plans on a larger scale, which utterly failed. When the war was over he lived on at Cherbourg, leading all the activities of a garrison town, and keeping in touch with the fashionable and learned world of Paris. Another man might have approached middle-age and the Revolution (the signs of which were already apparent) with the feeling that his best work was done, that his talents were not appreciated, and that he had no future to look forward to. But this was not Dumouriez's way. He would never grow old. He was always preparing himself for fresh adventures. About this time his friend Guibert fell into disgrace; and the advice he gave him exactly expressed what he was thinking about himself. 'Wait for an opportunity,' he wrote ; 'it will come. The work that you are putting into yourself will strengthen you to weather fresh gales; for it is your destiny to lead a troubled life.'

III

There was little work for a military man to do during the first two years of the Revolution. Nevertheless, at Cherbourg, in 1789, Dumouriez showed that it was possible to enforce order without damage to the new principle

of liberty. When his command there came to an end he settled in Paris; but was soon off again, under the ægis of Lafayette, investigating the political situation in Belgium. where a popular revolution, taking much the same forms, and using much the same language as in France, had an exactly opposite aim—the restoration of privilege, the defence of vested interests, an aristocratic constitution, and the supremacy of the clergy. In three weeks, helped by knowledge of his own countrymen, Dumouriez produced one of his admirable reports, advising France against trusting the revolutionary government in its present form, and suggesting ways in which Belgium could strengthen itself against military attack by the Austrians, which he saw to be imminent.

But what concerned Dumouriez even more than the fate of Belgium was the state of the French army. He looked to the Revolution for all kinds of reforms. Appointed in June, 1791 (after missing more than one other post) to the command of the 12th Division, he set himself to realize these ideas. The army, he said, should no longer be a mob paid to keep its eyes shut. Instead of blind subservience and mechanical discipline—the ideals of the Prussian tradition—there should be substituted intelligent obedience. A man, it must be realized, is a citizen first and a soldier afterwards. Officers should treat their men as fathers treat their sons. Generals should see that both officers and men are properly educated, and instruct them in the duties of patriotic citizenship. Such, in fact, were the principles which governed the creation of the New Army, and won the victories of the next twenty years. But it would take some time to put them into practice; and meanwhile, during the autumn and winter of 1791–2, war was rapidly approaching.

In March, 1792, the Feuillant Ministry, which had been propping up a precarious peace and a tottering throne, fell, and the Brissotins, the Republican war party, came into power. Dumouriez, who had friends at court as

well as in the Assembly, was marked out for inclusion in the new Ministry. His military experience and zeal for reform would have made him an excellent Minister of War. It was even more difficult to find among the Republicans a man with sufficient knowledge of foreign courts, and sufficiently at ease among the formalities and finesses of the old diplomatic service, to conduct the critical affairs of the Foreign Office. Dumouriez's friends remembered his travels in Spain and Portugal, his missions to Poland and Sweden, his acquaintance with Choiseul and de Broglie, his intimacy with Favier, and the series of memoranda in which he had summed up his views on the political and military problems of Europe. Gensonné, one of the leaders of the Brissotin party, had recently made Dumouriez his tutor in diplomacy, and was pressing his claims. He had the education, the manners, and the appearance for the part: his elegant clothes and powdered hair belonged, like Robespierre's, to the aristocracy of the old *régime*. On March 15 de Lessart fell before the attacks of the Diplomatic Committee, and Dumouriez became Foreign Minister in his place.

His policy was expounded in a memorandum which he had read at the Jacobins a year before, and which he now re-issued with some modifications. The foreign relations of France, he said, should be founded on the Declaration of Rights. Every country in Europe was the natural ally of a great, free, and righteous people. Within fifty years at most all Europe would be republican, and a New Diplomacy, open and above-board, would dissipate the mysteries and intrigues of the old. As a step towards this ideal, Dumouriez reorganized the Foreign Office on democratic lines, and did his best to take the Assembly into his confidence. He could not, indeed, altogether escape criticism. As the strong man of the Brissotin party he came under the fire of the Robespierrists, who were opposed to the war; whilst he was suspected by republicans of all colours as one who would work for the preservation of the throne.

But it was now almost impossible to avoid war, and the fate of the King would be determined by the issue of battle, not by debates in the Assembly. The Government must stand or fall by its conduct of hostilities; and almost all its hopes were placed in the success of Dumouriez in organizing a Girondist victory. Dumouriez, for his part, was never afraid of responsibility, and took on the work of two departments of government with a courage and clear-headedness that increased with every fresh difficulty.

Negotiations with Austria had become a matter of form since the death of Leopold on March 1. Within a week of of his accession it was certain that Francis II would adopt an aggressive attitude. Three days before the French declaration of war on April 20, Thugut had told Breteuil that Austria was prepared to march.

With war thus inevitable it became necessary to secure the neutrality of the non-combatants. Talleyrand was sent to England with instructions to inform Grenville that France was fighting for liberty against foreign tyrants, as England had fought for it against Louis XIV; to warn him that, if England took part against France, she would either see the re-establishment of the Franco-Austrian alliance and the Family Compact, or Holland revolutionized, and Belgium overrun by a republican army; to offer him, in return for his alliance, a share in the partition of Spanish America; or, if he will guarantee a loan of three or four millions sterling, the cession of the Island of Tobago. Whatever Grenville may have thought privately of Dumouriez's historical parallels, or of his advice, he contented himself with declaring that England would remain neutral.

In Germany outside Austria there was little enthusiasm for the war, and only two States supported the Emperor. Russia was not to be feared; Catherine the Great could be trusted to consult her own interests, and to proceed with the partition of Poland. The attitude of Sardinia long remained doubtful; till, in July, 1792, she came into the

field against France. The real danger to France lay in the alliance of Prussia with the Emperor; and this Dumouriez made all the greater efforts to break down, as he had always maintained that Prussia was the natural ally of France. But though he used a series of intermediaries—the Ambassador Custine, the *émigré* Heymann, an agent named Benoît, and the Duke of Deux-Ponts; though he offered to compensate Louis XVI's brothers, to let the *émigrés* return to France, and even to restore the church lands, he could not separate the allies. Frederick William refused to hear the voice of the charmer. There was nothing for it but to prepare for war against both powers.

For this, Le Grave, the inexperienced War Minister, put himself in Dumouriez's hands. The latter was ready with a plan of operations which in its main lines anticipated in a remarkable manner that adopted by the French General Staff to meet the invasion of 1914. On the greater part of the front a defensive was to be maintained, but at the most vulnerable points of the frontier defence was to take the form of an offensive. Lyons was to be guarded by throwing an army into Savoy, and Paris by invading the Netherlands, and occupying Liège. The first results of this plan were as disastrous as in 1914. The army of the south was not ready; and, while the army of the Rhine (under Luckner) remained inactive, the advance of the central army (under Lafayette) was compromised and held up by the serious reverses suffered by the northern army on its attempt first to advance into the Netherlands. Dumouriez, whose courage always rose in face of defeat, transferred Luckner to the beaten army and ordered a fresh attack.

This might have succeeded—for the Austrians were in no strength to resist a determined advance—had not all military operations been held up, from June to August, 1792, by political events in Paris. Luckner and Lafayette might advance towards the Belgian frontier; but their heads were turned towards Paris. The Girondin leaders

might talk of foreign invasion; but their hope was to use the army against their Jacobin enemies in the capital. The *Fédérés* marched from all parts of France to fight the Austrians, and stayed in Paris to sack the Tuileries. The appointment of Servan to the War Office in place of Le Grave (May 9) split the Girondist Ministry into two groups, and Dumouriez found himself driven into opposition. When, on June 12, the King dismissed Roland, Servan, and Clavière, Dumouriez might perhaps have headed a national government, but for the bitter attacks of Brissot and the Girondins, who drove him out of office three days after he had become Minister of War (June 15). On June 20 came the first attack on the Tuileries, and Dumouriez was there, revenging himself for the King's personal as well as public treachery. In July he was back at the front, opposing Lafayette (who was in half a mind to lead his army on Paris), and making himself as indispensable to the Jacobins as he had been to the Girondins. When August 10 came, and the fall of the throne, he disobeyed Lafayette's army orders prescribing a fresh oath of allegiance to the nation, the law, and the King, and wrote to the Assembly that he approved of the new revolution, and recognized no other sovereign but the French people.

IV

The next few months were the climax of Dumouriez's career. On August 16 his profession of faith in the new Government was rewarded by the supreme command of the northern army. During the following weeks, manœuvring for position against Brunswick, he at any rate made fewer mistakes than his opponent, and had the sense not to engage battle until he could be sure of having a superiority of numbers. On September 20 it was his promptness in backing up Kellermann which made possible the victory of Valmy—the Thermopylæ, as he termed it, of the

French Republic. And if he did not annihilate the Prussian army—he was not sure of his own troops, and he still hoped to detach Frederick William from the Austrian alliance—his negotiations ended in the retreat of the enemy, and the evacuation, without a shot fired, of all the ground that they had won.

During the week that he spent in Paris, between October 11 and 18, he was the national hero, and the favourite of all political parties. 'He dined at the Rolands, and offered a bouquet to Marie Phlipon; he made up his quarrel with Brissot; he told Vergniaud how much he thought of him; he offered a Staff appointment to Guadet's brother, and corresponded with Gensonné during the Argonne campaign. He had interviews with Danton and Santerre; he attended a meeting of the Jacobins, embraced Robespierre, had a long talk with Couthon, congratulated his friends and brothers on having 'begun a great epoch,' and promised them to rescue the peoples from the 'tyranny of kings.' Only when Marat attacked him for an act of military discipline, Dumouriez 'looked him up and down disdainfully, remarked, "Oh, are you the person called Marat? Then I have nothing to say to you," and turned his back on him.'

A few days later he was back on the northern front, fêted at his native Cambrai, and announcing in a manifesto from Valenciennes that he came to deliver the Belgians from their Austrian tyrants. On November 6 he made good his promise by the victory of Jemmappes, which was won by the energy and skill he devoted to every detail of the action, and which proved to all Europe that the New Army had to be taken seriously. Wellington, indeed, thought poorly of this battle. 'Yes,' he said, 'he conquered Belgium when there was no one to defend it.' But it was hailed as the Rocroi of the Revolution, and Dumouriez as a second Condé. His portrait was sold in the Paris streets, and at least one child born in the lucky year was named after him Civilis Victoire Jemmappes Dumouriez.

There is a passage in Dumouriez's *Memoirs* in which he expresses the regret that his public career in France did not end on the climax of Valmy. He had hoped that war would destroy the political factions in the capital: he found that it made them worse. He had expected that, after the retreat from Valmy, Austria and Prussia would make peace: as they would not, the war must be pushed on into the Netherlands. A victory in Belgium, he had calculated, would enable peace to be made; and the return of the victorious army would lead to the re-establishment of the King and the Constitution: instead of which Jemmappes was followed two months later by the trial and execution of the King, four months later by the evacuation of Belgium, and seven months later by the destruction of the Girondin party. 'If he had been able to read the future, Dumouriez would not have hesitated to abandon his country—not, indeed, to join the other *émigrés*, and bring back iron and flame upon it, but to lament the excesses of a great people, which had become in three short weeks so unlike itself.'

The months which immediately followed the conquest of Belgium were, in fact, ruinous to Dumouriez's own reputation, whatever they may have been to that of France; and we have to ask what were the causes that turned the patriot victor of November, 1792, into the traitor and refugee of March, 1793.

The first was the inefficiency—and worse—of the War Office under Pache, the successor of Servan. He was a Jacobin, surrounded by Jacobins, jealous and suspicious of Dumouriez. By his neglect the army was starved of money and provisions, and the whole conduct of the commissariat allowed to get into incompetent or dishonest hands. On the eve of Jemmappes, Dumouriez had been forced to borrow money for the expenses of his army from private individuals; he had no doctors and no ambulances. In December his advance was held up by lack of supplies. At the end of January he visited Paris, secured the dis-

missal of Pache, and got his own lieutenant Beurnonville put in his place. It was not too late to reform the War Office; but it was too late to repair the breach of confidence which had been created between the soldiers and the civilians, and particularly between the Commander-in-Chief and the heads of the Government.

Nor was the conduct of the war the only ground of disagreement. Dumouriez was quite out of sympathy with the political policy that the Convention was pursuing in Belgium. The Belgians wanted freedom from Austria, but on their own terms, which included complete independence of France, and a clerical-aristocratic government. The Convention was divided between the desire to impose a more democratic constitution on a people who had (after all) been liberated in the name of republicanism, and the desire to enrich France, and to complete its natural frontiers, by the annexation of so convenient and wealthy a country. The decree of December 15 satisfied both these ideas. It instructed the French commanders in Belgium 'to suppress the old administration of the country, and to set up a new *régime*, in which no one was to have a vote or hold an office who had not sworn allegiance to liberty, equality, and the abolition of privilege; and to put all the property of the State and its present rulers 'under the safeguard and protection (such was the cynical phrase) of the French Republic.' To Dumouriez this decree seemed an act of tyranny and spoliation: he refused to execute it, and tried, but in vain, to get it withdrawn. He went back to the front at the end of January, 1793, completely out of sympathy with the policy that he was expected to enforce.

A few days later (February 1) the declaration of war against England and Holland tempted Dumouriez into an enterprise which had proved too much, 120 years before, for the overwhelming armies of Louis XIV, and was not likely to be accomplished now by a hastily organized force of 16,000 recruits. The invasion of Holland began on February 16. Up to the first week in March all went well.

The enemy was taken by surprise. But on March 16 the inexperienced French troops were decisively defeated by Cobourg's veterans at Neerwinden; and instead of conquering Holland, Dumouriez was in danger of losing Belgium.

This failure brought Dumouriez's relations with the Government to a serious crisis. So long as he was victorious they could afford to overlook his political offences—his royalism, his quarrel with the War Office, and his refusal to carry out the Belgian decree. So long as he was victorious he could count on increasing support from the army and the people in the *coup* that he was already planning against the Government. The defeat in Belgium meant that both he and they must define their position, and act upon it at once. Dumouriez, who always believed in taking the offensive, had already opened the attack, nearly a week before Neerwinden, by a letter to the Convention (March 12) which made it clear that he intended to turn his retreat from Belgium into an advance on Paris, to dismiss the Jacobin Government, and to set himself up as President of a Council of Regency for the young Louis XVII—for it seems clear, in spite of what was said at the time, that he did not want to substitute either the Duc d'Orléans or his son, the Duc de Chartres, for the legitimate Bourbon. But, in order to carry out this plan, Dumouriez must have the support of his army, and must make Cobourg his accomplice. The army must be ready to follow him to Paris, and Cobourg must agree not to attack him in the rear. Cobourg bargained for the complete evacuation of Belgium, and to this Dumouriez agreed, in a conference with Mack on the 25th—the same Mack who surrendered to Napoleon at Ulm in 1805. As to the army, Dumouriez's views were shared by most of his Staff, General Miranda being the only notable exception; but it was not at all certain that the rank and file would follow him. His prestige had suffered by the defeat at Neerwinden, and his troops were discouraged by re-

treat. In the third week of March they might nevertheless have followed him; but by the first week in April, when his final appeal was made, they knew that he had been condemned by the Governing Committees, and outlawed by the Convention. The infantry and cavalry of the old army were still willing to support him, but the artillery, which prided itself on its republicanism, and the volunteers of the new army, refused to march against Paris.

Meanwhile the Government had not been idle. As soon as Dumouriez's letter of March 12 was received, Danton was sent with Delacroix to interview him, which he did at Louvain on the 20th. On the 26th the Committee of General Defence discussed the letter of the 12th, with Danton's report. As a result it was agreed to make a last effort to reconcile Dumouriez with the Jacobin Government: but he refused to have anything to do with the Jacobin emissaries who interviewed him on the 26–27th. Consequently, on the 29th, in view of further information as to his plans, the Committee condemned Dumouriez, and the next day Commissioners were sent by the Convention to deprive him of his command. Dumouriez retaliated on April 2, at St. Amand, by arresting them, and issuing a series of proclamations to the nation and army. The next day he was declared an outlaw, and fresh Commissioners were sent to arrest him. On the 3rd and 4th he made his fruitless appeal to the army. On the 5th he went over to the Austrians.

It is natural to compare Dumouriez's defection with that of Lafayette. Both men were in revolt against the Republican Government; but Lafayette opposed its first beginnings, before its attack on the throne; Dumouriez turned against it, after professing allegiance to the Revolution of August 10. Lafayette was a man of no party, who deserted as a protest against the violation of the Constitution; Dumouriez was a party leader and an ex-Minister, who turned against his own friends. Lafayette had no ambitions for himself, and had returned to private life a year

before his desertion; Dumouriez's whole design breathed ambition, and involved for himself a position that would have been almost a dictatorship. In a word, Lafayette's defection was that of an honest man who could see no more to do for his country; Dumouriez's that of a dishonest man who could see no more to do for himself. If it is fair to call Lafayette a deserter, it would be unfair to call Dumouriez anything less than a traitor.

V

While the deserter languished in an Austrian prison the traitor was chatting with the Austrian Minister at Brussels, and visiting the courts of Western Germany. But his compact with Cobourg was soon disowned, and his presence not desired either in England or the Netherlands. 'I can't receive you as an *émigré*,' said one of the German princes, 'and I should be sorry to hang you as a Jacobin.' After an obscure interval in Switzerland, Dumouriez reappears at Hamburg in April, 1794. In 1799 he travels to Mitau to see Louis XVIII, to whom he has now given his easy allegiance, and goes on a visit to the Emperor Paul at Petersburg. In 1805 he writes to Napoleon a letter full of excuse and flattery, asking for employment: 'You have done,' he says, 'what I should have done, had my talents and my means allowed.' But Napoleon, perhaps scenting a rival, called him an intriguer, and excepted him from all his amnesties—a slight which Dumouriez revenged by his *Jugement sur Buonaparte* a few years later. From October, 1800, onwards Dumouriez found his final refuge in England, and spent his last years giving advice to the British Government in its conduct of the war against Napoleon. We see him cultivating the friendship of Nelson, who finds something likeable in him; riding behind George III in Hyde Park at a review of the Volunteers; entertained by the Prince of Wales in his fan-

tastic pavilion at Brighton; and congratulating Wellington on his victories in Spain. 'I knew Dumouriez very well,' Wellington is reported to have said. 'He was a clever shrewd man, very like an intrigant. He busied himself very much in drawing up manifestoes and memorials. So to keep him quiet I entered into correspondence with him, and continued it to his death. It was chiefly about geography and topography, on which Dumouriez had a great many unfounded notions.' The 'manifestoes and memorials' of which the Duke speaks so slightingly covered as wide a ground as Dumouriez's own career. He wrote on the defence of Ireland and England (1804), on a campaign in Italy (1805), on an expedition to Montevideo (1806), on Naples and Portugal (1807), on Spain and Sicily (1820–1), and on the State of Europe in 1806, and again in 1819. He did not return to France in 1814, though invited to do so: there was a bigger pension and better employment for him in this country. He lived to regret the Bourbon restoration, and to hope for the succession of his old lieutenant, Louis Philippe; but not to see it realized. At the age of eighty-three, after spending twenty years in or near London (Acton, 1803-7, Little Ealing, 1812-22), he moved to Turville Park, near Henley. There he died, the next year, and was buried in Henley parish church. A peaceful and provincial end to a life of audacious adventure, for which all Europe was not too large a stage! An end which might have been that of his great supplanter, Napoleon, and which has been shared by the illustrious refugees of more than one revolution.

'I knew him well in his latter years,' wrote Croker, 'and liked the man, and loved to talk with him of those revolutionary scenes; but he never was able, nor, indeed, I think, very anxious, to explain the contradictory incidents of his short ministerial career. I remained persuaded that his ambition had led him to undertake a responsibility which he found more perilous than he expected; and that, having by his presumption led the King into greater difficulties,

he very suddenly and shabbily abandoned him, and secured himself for a time in command of the army, where his successes and personal glory only served to accelerate the catastrophe of his unfortunate master, and to delay for a few months his own proscription and exile.' The charge of abandoning the King is unfair, for it takes no account of the King's treachery. So, for the same reason, is the charge of accelerating the King's fall. Dumouriez was but one of a series of politicians who tried to build a house on the sand of the royal favour, and failed. But ambition is a true bill. It was for ambition that Dumouriez abandoned the Girondins for the Jacobins, and for ambition that he plotted against both for a Royalist restoration. He was a man of many talents and few principles. What he said of Napoleon was a verdict on himself: 'His career has been brilliant, but too easy.' . . . 'An extraordinary man; not a great man, not even a celebrated man, but a notorious man.' . . . 'The spoilt child of fortune, whose greatest talent is to be persuaded of that fact.'

Dumouriez lies in a foreign land, 'waiting (as the Henley epitaph says) for the time when his country will do him justice.' He may have to wait long; for France is not fond of traitors. Nevertheless, he did her great service; and of all the leaders of the Revolution none was more completely a Frenchman.

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